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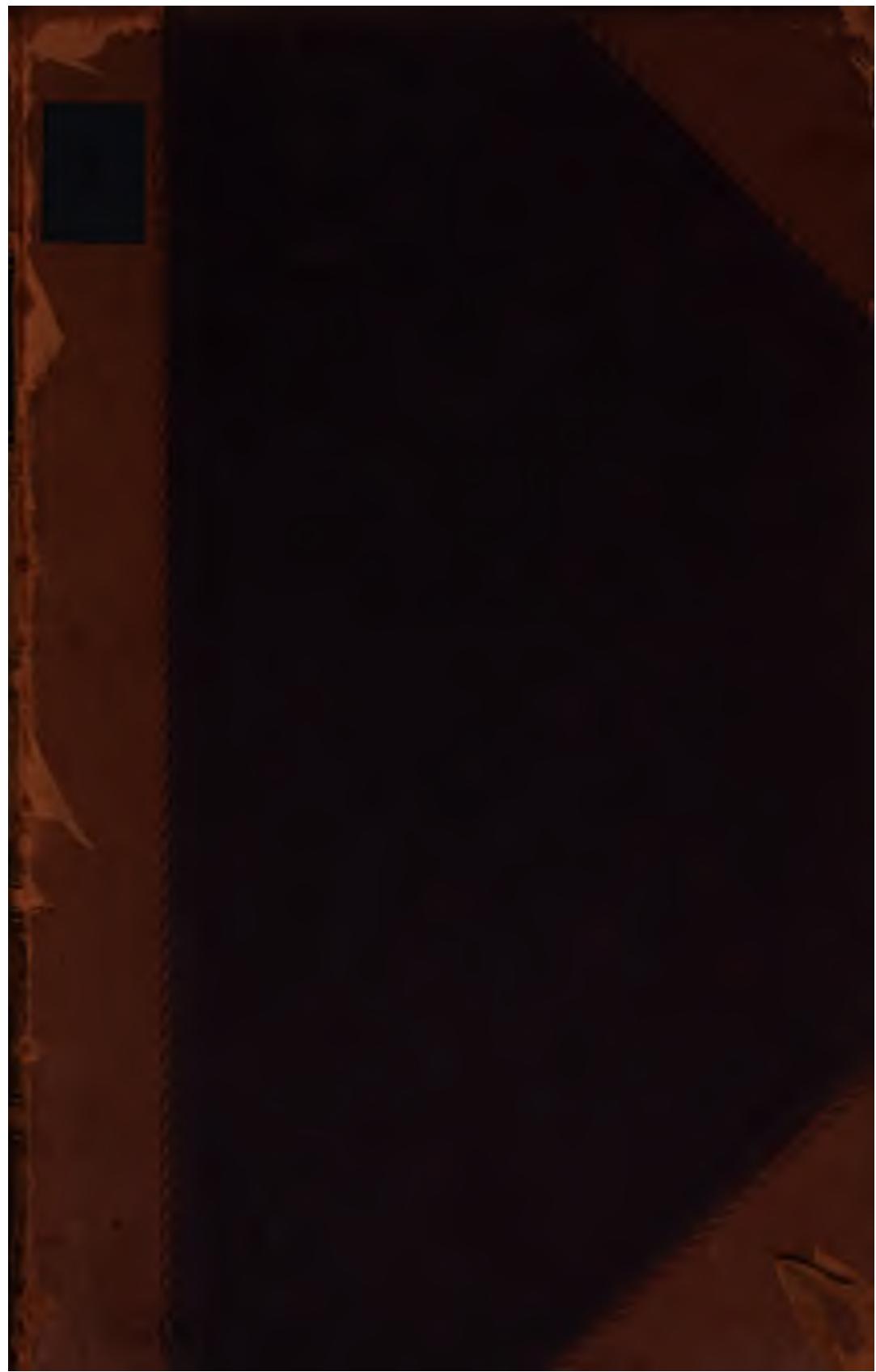
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THE IMAGE OF GOD IN MAN.

FOUR SERMONS,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,

IN FEBRUARY, MDCCXL.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM HARNESS, A.M.

OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE,

MINISTER OF REGENT SQUARE CHAPEL, ST. PANCRAS.

59

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. G. F. & J. RIVINGTON,
ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD, AND WATERLOO PLACE, PALL MALL;

AND SOLD BY

J. & J. J. DEIGHTON, AND T. STEVENSON,
CAMBRIDGE.

1841.

899 .

LONDON :
GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.



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SERMON I.

THE IMAGE OF GOD IN MAN.

GENESIS i. 27.

“ God created man in his own image.”

THE account, which the Holy Scriptures give of the formation of man, is strikingly different from that, which has been given of all the other works of the Almighty. Of the earth on which we dwell ; of the seas and streams by which it is intersected ; of the heavens its canopy ; of the bright bodies which give it light ; of the herbs, and trees, and flowers, with which it is clothed and beautified ; of the various living things, with which the air, the land, the waters are so thickly tenanted, we find the same form of words successively employed, and simply read that God commanded them to be ; that, as He commanded, they were produced ; and that, when produced, He

looked upon and approved of them as “good.” All these inferior things appear to have owed their origin to a lighter effort of His wisdom and His power. But on the sixth and the last day, when arrived as it were by gradual ascent from the creation of the lowest to the production of the highest of His works ; when about to call that being into existence, who was to be the chief of all earthly things, and to “have dominion over them,” a most important change in the mode of expression is introduced ; and we read, “ And God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness¹. ” “ Let us,” with an appeal to the counsel of the Son, and the Holy Spirit :—“ Let us *make* man,” not merely call him into existence, as the elder Fathers of the Church have observed, by the operation of the divine word, but raise him up as a divine work ; and “ Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ;” not, as the other creatures were formed, in realization of some design conceived by the divine wisdom, but after the likeness of God Himself. And, in accordance with this purpose, we are assured, that “ God created man in his own image ; in the image of God created he him ; male and female created he them². ”

It is impossible to read this account of the origin of our first parents, and not acknowledge that it conveys an intimation of some eminent distinction, which has been exclusively conferred upon the human

¹ Gen. i. 26.

² Gen. i. 27.

race. We are, indeed, the beings of a day; incapable of counting on a single hour as our own; uncertain whether we shall be permitted to carry our slightest purpose into execution; exposed to a thousand perils; and liable to be diverted from our holiest and most stedfast resolution by the sudden gust of passion, or the unexpected temptation; but, still, though weak and frail, we are invested with the highest dignity which can be bestowed upon any creature;—for there is some portion of our nature, which bears the impress of the image of the Creator. It is to the consideration of this most important subject, the likeness of God in man, that I purpose requiring your attention in my present and three following discourses. My plan is this: I shall first, with humble but diligent inquiry, endeavour to search out that principle of our being, in which the divine image may be distinctly shown to have existence; and I shall afterwards direct your attention to the speculative and practical consequences, which must necessarily result from the discovery of that principle.

But here an obstacle meets us at the very threshold of our investigation. We find it stated by many commentators, that “the image of God” has been lost through the transgression of Adam, and that, though restored through faith to the regenerate disciples of our Saviour, it is no longer to be looked for among the great mass and body of our fellow-creatures. Whence such an opinion is derived it

might be somewhat difficult to determine. It has probably passed into the notes of the more popular editions of the Bible, and some of our explanatory catechisms, from the descriptions, more rhetorical than exact, which a certain class of theologians have been pleased to give of the lamentable consequences of the fall of man ; but it most certainly could never have been gathered from any fair collation of the notices which the Holy Scriptures afford us on that head. To discuss the kind, or the degree, of taint, which our nature has incurred through the disobedience of our first parents, does not come within the scope of my design. On the extent of the pernicious influences of that great sin, I do not presume to touch. I leave it for others to determine the extent to which the impression of the divine image may have been more or less impaired by it. But the point, with which alone I am at present concerned, and which I feel that I may maintain with most perfect confidence in the support of the sacred writings, is, that the likeness to God, after which Adam was formed, however it may have been defaced, has not altogether been obliterated by his offence, and that, from him, it has descended to his posterity. This position might, with very little exercise of ingenuity, be substantiated by arguments drawn from the brief narrative of the fatal event itself. But I will pass over these, and be content with adducing one single text, which must, I apprehend, be regarded as conclusive on the subject by every un-

prejudiced reader of the Bible. The Almighty, addressing Noah after the flood, and uttering His solemn denunciation against murder, says, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed ; for in the image of God made He man³." These are the words of the Creator Himself. They convey the reason on which He asserts the enormity, and justifies the extreme punishment, of the sin of murder. The reason why the man, who slays another, shall be put to death is, because man is formed in the image of God ; and that reason could have had no conceivable force or application, among the posterity of Noah, if the image referred to had been forfeited by the transgression of Adam. This passage alone is to my mind conclusive on the subject. But I would, moreover, add, that fallen and corrupted as human nature is, the Apostles never imagined it to be so far fallen and corrupted as to be absolutely degraded from the hallowed dignity of its original creation. This is manifest from a text in the Epistle of St. James. That Apostle alludes to man's likeness to God in a manner, which plainly shews him to have considered it a grace still appertaining to us and the common attribute of the whole human race. Remonstrating, in a passage of strong manly eloquence, against the abuse of the gift of speech, he writes, "The tongue can no man tame ; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father ;

³ Gen. ix. 6.

and therewith curse we men, which are formed after the similitude of God⁴." In these words St. James clearly signifies, that the sin of cursing our fellow men derives a deeper guilt and a certain character of blasphemy, on account of its being levelled against creatures who are formed in the resemblance of the Most High. And this argument could have no weight, nor, indeed, could it ever have been urged by an author, writing under the influence of the Spirit of truth, if those creatures no longer retained that holy similitude in which they had been formed.

Having then disposed of this preliminary objection, having shewn that the divine likeness in which our first parents were created is still extant in their children, and that we, consequently, shall not, in attempting to discern the traces of its lineaments, be occupying ourselves upon a task which must of necessity conduct to an unprofitable result,—we will now turn to the contemplation of our variously and wonderfully constituted nature, with the design of discovering that portion of it to which we may look, with the most probable expectation of success, for a glimpse of this its first, essential, distinctive, and elevating principle.

It must be self-evident to all of us, that the two great component elements of human nature are the material body and the spiritual soul. The first of these, we are told, was "formed of the dust of the

⁴ James iii. 8, 9.

ground⁵ ;” and by no modification of such a substance could the likeness of the Deity be constructed. “God,” says our Saviour, “is a Spirit⁶ ;” and no resemblance can possibly be produced between a material structure, such as the human body, and a spiritual intelligence, such as the Almighty Power by whom it was designed and moulded. Still less can we conceive the existence of any likeness to the Deity subsisting in those appetites which appertain to the body; which, by their continually recurring claims upon our attention, are continually bearing witness to the weakness and dependence of its condition; which, though pampered into great importance by our self-indulgence, are no more, in their original design, than the means of making known its want of support; and which, though the remembrance of them may survive eternally to haunt and to torment the soul of the sensualist, by the agonizing regret of the companions he has lost in them, and by an ineffectual longing after the gratifications he has once derived from their society, must ever suffer diminution with the ailment or decay of our corporeal faculties, and must eventually perish with their dissolution. When we read, that “man was created in the image of God,” we must studiously exclude from our minds that notion of visible form which such a mode of expression is calculated to excite, and receive it, in a metaphorical sense, as expressive of a strong resemblance. Those

⁵ Genesis ii. 7.

⁶ John iv. 24.

bodily organs, by means of which we carry out our designs, may correspond with those material instruments which the Almighty employs to effect the counsels of His providence; but they can never be regarded as bearing any similitude to the immaterial nature of the Deity Himself.

But since all idea of looking for the Divine image in the body and its appetites must be indignantly rejected, not only as involving an absurdity in itself, but as derogatory to the majesty of the Most High; that image must be resident in the soul. Let us, therefore, direct our attention to that more refined and subtle element of our nature, and try, with more favourable prospects of success, what result may await our investigation. Some commentators have conceived that this resemblance may be found in the *immortality* of the soul. Regarding it comprehensively, as the spiritual portion of our being, and without any reference to that striking distinction between its intellectual and moral faculties, which every man who reflects upon such subjects must be conscious of, they have asserted, that it presents the similitude to the Deity which we are endeavouring to discover, in the attribute of eternal life. Whether the soul really possesses this gift, as an essential property of its nature, will be a matter for our after consideration; but, admitting the supposition to be correct, I cannot think that it would afford an adequate explanation of the language of Scripture in this place. I do not see what points of comparison could subsist between such

an image of the Almighty as the sacred text appears to indicate in man, and any thing which has reference to the mere duration of time. To a creature formed after the image of God, to be endowed with the immortality of God, would, indeed, be a most eminent addition to the dignity conferred upon him in his creation; but it could not of itself constitute that image. Satan and his angels are all supposed in the same manner to be inheritors of eternal life, but we can hardly conceive that the language in which the holy Scriptures have spoken of the nature of Adam, might, on that account, be equally applied to them, and that they also might be described as bearing the image of the Deity. It would appear to be a very loose and careless mode of expression to say, that one intelligent and moral being was formed "in the image, after the likeness," of another, to whom he bore no similitude in the constitution of his mind or character, but was only similarly circumstanced with regard to the tenure by which his existence was to be held'. But insufficient as this interpretation would be, even admitting the supposition on which it is grounded to be correct, is it so certain that eternal life is an original, essential, and inalienable attribute of the human soul? It appears, indeed, to be very

⁷ I have not noticed the interpretation of those who suppose that man's likeness to the Deity consists in his "having dominion over" the inferior creatures; because, it appears from the sacred text itself, Gen. i, 26, that the dominion is the consequence of the likeness, not the ground of it.

generally conceived that man is naturally immortal. But this is not the doctrine of Scripture. Such an opinion is inconsistent with the very idea of Creation. Existence itself is not natural to any, even the highest created being in the universe. A being, to whom existence was natural, must have existed from all eternity, and therefore, could not have been created. Whatever began to be, derived its being from God; and to God, "who upholdeth all things by the word of his power⁸," it is indebted for every moment of its continuance. And "when it is said," observes Hale⁹, "that man was made *an heir of immortality, according to the hope of eternal life,* (Titus 3. 7.) this is not to be understood as being derived from any *inherent* virtue in his nature, as if the *spirit or mind* were *necessarily* immortal, according to the arrogant notions of heathen philosophers and philosophising divines of their school; for the sentence pronounced upon Adam, '*Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return,*' (Gen. iii. 19.) included the dissolution of the spirit also." "They," says Bishop Taylor¹, "are injurious to Christ, who think that from Adam we might have inherited immortality." And if we look to the Bible, and are content to receive our knowledge on this subject from the intimations which its sacred pages may afford us, we shall be led to conclude, that the immortality which man possesses is not a natural pro-

⁸ Hebrews i. 8.

⁹ Chronology, vol. ii. p. 5.

¹ Doctrine and Practice of Repentance, chap. vii. sec. 1, 2.

perty of the human soul, but a grace supernaturally conferred upon it. Adam, we read, was “created in the image of God;” but that he did not receive by its means the privilege of immortality, may be clearly shown from the very circumstances of his history. From it we learn, that eternal life was not an original endowment of his being, but a subsequent blessing to which he was admitted, on condition of his living in obedience to the command of his Creator. It was communicated to him, during his state of innocence, by the sacramental influences imparted to the Tree of Life, which was so designated, because it was the appointed instrument of conferring upon him “that thing, which by nature he could not have,” to live for ever by eating of its fruit. And when he had transgressed, and was expelled from Paradise; when he was cut off from all farther access to that hallowed food; when he was reduced to his primary state of being;—the principle of dissolution, which was inherent to it, but which had been miraculously suspended, came into operation, and he was rendered subject to that gradual decay and eventual death, which the Almighty has appointed as the destiny of the whole animal creation upon earth. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin²,” which means, according to Bishop Taylor’s interpretation, that “by Adam’s sin, human nature was reduced to its own mortality.” There are persons,

² Romans v. 12.

indeed, who maintain, that the punishment which Adam incurred by his offence, did not affect the immortality of his soul, but that it changed the condition of his immortality; that it did not merely involve the punishment of temporal death, but of everlasting wretchedness ensuing. We should be at a loss to find any scriptural authority for such a view of the case; and it is absolutely contrary to the terms, in which the Almighty declared his prohibition of the forbidden fruit. His words are, "If thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die;" or, as we read in the marginal translation, "dying, thou shalt die." And, "it seems," observes Locke³, "a strange way of understanding a law, which requires the plainest and most direct expressions, to imagine that by *death* in this place, should be meant an eternal *life* of misery. Could any man be supposed to understand by a law, which says, 'for felony thou shalt surely die,' not that the felon should lose his life, but that he should be kept alive in perpetual torments; or," demands Locke, "would any man think himself fairly dealt with who was so used?" The death incurred by our first parents, on transgressing the command, which placed the eternal duration of their existence in their own hands, must have been considered of themselves, as in truth it was, the death of the entire man, of soul, as well as of body; and we may rest assured, that this, and

³ Reasonableness of Christianity.

nothing else than this, was inflicted upon them⁴. But if such would appear to be the case from the intimations of holy writ, it can never be maintained that the divine image, in which they had been formed, and which, as we have seen, has never been obliterated, consists in our possessing the attribute of eternal life; for it is manifest that eternal life is not an original property, but a superadded grace of the soul, bestowed on man in his state of innocence, by means of the fruit of the tree of life, and restored to him since the fall, as “the gift of God⁵,” through the atonement and the mediation of the promised Saviour.

To find then that holy principle, which imparts a certain character of divinity to the human race, and constitutes its dignity and pre-eminence among the works of the Almighty, we must take a nearer survey of the spiritual portion of our nature; and we will endeavour to facilitate the task of investigation, by drawing a line of demarcation between its several faculties, and removing that class of them from our view, among which there appear no reasonable grounds for expecting to discover the object of our search. For this end it will not be necessary to enter upon any very subtle, or minute, or intricate analysis of the energies that combine in the consti-

⁴ On this subject, see Bishop Gleig's edition of Stackhouse, vol. i. p. 78, et seq.

⁵ Romans vi. 23.

tution of our souls. The broad distinction, which subsists between our intellectual and moral faculties, between the endowments, which popular metaphysics, with a very obvious and intelligible classification, ascribe to the head and to the heart, will be fully sufficient for our purpose; and the question is, to which of these great divisions of our spiritual being are we to direct our view, with the hope of discerning the traces of the divine image?

Now, here I have little doubt but many, with that inordinate value which is almost universally attached to the successful efforts of the understanding; with that extravagant reverence, which is entertained for its scientific discoveries, its elaborate researches, its ingenious theories, and its complicated contrivances; with that restless and impatient hankering after the petty distinctions, which may be acquired by its exertions; with that habit of regarding every simple, honest, unobtrusive virtue as secondary to the least important of its accomplishments; with that easy tolerance and sophistical palliation of every vice in the persons of those, who are renowned for their learning, their wit, their eloquence, or their writings; with that gross deification of mind, and its achievements, which constitutes one of the evil characteristics of our generation;—I have little doubt but many, very many, of my hearers will be disposed to look for the most exalted principle of their being to that department of their faculties, for which their respect and appreciation is the highest, and assume, that

they bear about them the resemblance of their Maker in the wonderful energies and the manifold resources of the intellect. My brethren, that portion of our immaterial nature is one of God's good gifts to His highly favoured creatures, and, like every other gift with which He has endowed our being, most truly does it deserve our deep and humble, our grateful and fearful admiration. But, however diversified its powers, however penetrating its scan, however vast its capacity, I never can bring myself to believe, that any trace of the image of God is to be discovered in the intellectual division of the soul of man.

What is the human intellect in its original condition?—A wonderfully constituted instrument, possessing the capacity of receiving, retaining, and comparing the ideas presented to it through the medium of the senses. It is, at first, a mere blank page, on which characters gradually become delineated, as it is impressed with the images of external objects. And what resemblance to the Deity is to be perceived in the primary, bare, uninformed state of the intellect? What resemblance of His holy and spiritual nature could possibly be wrought upon it, through the agency of its only natural instructors, the ear, the touch, the eye, the smell, the taste, by the traces of those material things, with which alone the senses are conversant?

Again, in its very mode of operation, we discover an evidence, that the divine likeness, after which we are formed, does not exist in that department of our

souls. "In some of our capacities," says a distinguished member of this university⁶, "we may perhaps exhibit a faint shadow of our Maker's image; but in the reasoning power of which we sometimes vainly boast, we bear to Him, I believe, no resemblance whatever. To God all truth is by intuition. By us truth is only apprehended through the slow and toilsome process of comparison. So that the powers and capacities, forming the very implements of our strength, are also the indications of our weakness."

Again, the principle within us, which reflects the likeness of the Deity, must, of necessity, be the high and master principle of our being. It is that element of our nature, in comparison with which all others must be inferior in quality; before which they ought to be content to hold a secondary position; and which, when really ascertained, must be universally allowed to inherit a legitimate claim to the control and sovereignty of the entire man. Free agents, as we are, we have the power of rebelling against its authority; but such an authority must rightfully appertain to it. Now, this superior position in the economy of the human soul can never be the prerogative of the mind. It is essentially and irredeemably a servant. The affections, the passions, and the appetites retain every one of its faculties as the ministers of their demands. It may, occasionally, be seen amusing itself by the trifling and unprofitable avoca-

⁶ Professor Sedgwick's *Discourse on the Studies of the University.*

tions, for which we can perceive no other motive or end, than the occupation of that irrepressible activity with which it is endowed ; but not a single strenuous exertion does the mind ever make, except at the suggestion of some inclination which is distinct from itself, and in pursuit of some enjoyment with which it has no immediate concern. All its powers are employed in subjection to our inclinations ; and, according to the character of those inclinations, will they be employed to good, or to useless, or to evil issues. It is as much the instrument, formed to devise the plans for gratifying the appetites, or the affections, which sway the will ; as the body is an instrument framed for carrying the plans it may devise into execution. But the intellect is not only under their guidance ; it is, naturally, the most abject, fawning, and ignominious of their slaves. The strongest effort of our religious and moral principles is required, to raise it to any really elevated objects, or to arouse it to any honourable exertion. Who is there among us, but is conscious of this ? Who does not perceive, that, with all the wonders, the beauty, the magnificence of the universe extended before our view, the natural tendency of the intellect is to occupy itself with the frivolous incidents, the paltry successes, the miserable gains, which may delight, or stimulate, the ruling passion of the heart ? Who does not perceive, that, with all the wisdom of human learning and of sacred Scripture, to afford food for contemplation, it is always pandering to our low and

to which they lead. But let us look at them singly, and see how much the intellect is concerned in the virtue that attaches to them. "Prudence" has been defined ⁸ as "relating to actions to be done, and the due means, order, reasons, and method of doing, or not doing." All these are points to be determined by the intellect; and when the actions which are thus wisely planned are good, and the motives which suggest them are good, we have the virtue prudence; but, on the other hand, when the action and the motive are evil, the same operation of the intellect produces not the virtue prudence, but the vice of deep and crafty cunning. With regard to "penetration, discernment, and discretion," they appear to be qualities involved in that habit of mind, at which we have just glanced, and which is either prudence and virtue, or cunning and vice, according to the disposition of the individual who possesses it. Look at "industry," again, as it exists apart from any moral considerations; and what is the intrinsic value of it? In the abstract, it is the habit of continuous exertion. Surely, there can be nothing in such a habit, independent of its cause and its results, which can be respected as meritorious; for, if it were, all continuous exertion would be laudable, whether meanly or nobly, whether frivolously or importantly, whether perniciously or beneficially, directed. The same may be urged of "perseverance," the indefatigable pursuit of

⁸ Judge Hale.

an appointed object : it is either a valuable, a contemptible, or a hateful quality, according as the object it is engaged upon is of an useful, a trifling, or a malignant description. Consider "frugality," the custom of economizing our resources, a virtue of high honor, when adopted as a means of creating a fund for private charity, or for the accomplishment of any praiseworthy design, but utterly despicable, if accumulation be the only end regarded, and most odious, from its deep-rooted and deliberate criminality, if practised, as not unfrequently is the case, that, by stinting ourselves in the ordinary charges incident to our condition, we may be enabled to afford a more lavish expenditure on our hidden sins. "Temperance" is a quality of the same class with "frugality;" an admirable grace when practised, at the suggestion and by the aid of the Holy Spirit, that, by a continuous course of self-discipline and self-restraint, we may acquire a perfect mastery in the command of our passions and our appetites, and that, from having all our mental faculties free and unoppressed by any weight of sensuality, we may enter with alacrity on the discharge of our social and religious duties ; but altogether undeserving of approbation, when practised, as by the gladiators of old, "who," says St. Paul, "were temperate in all things that they might obtain their corruptible crown⁹ ;" and a bitter curse, when adopted as a part of their stock in trade by the subtle

⁹ 1 Cor. ix. 25.

adventurer, by the fraudulent gambler, or by any of that cold and wily class of men, who prey upon their fellow-creatures, with a view of keeping alive the shrewdness of their perceptions, and enabling them to take their victims at an advantage. And as to "secrecy," the habit of not mentioning what we know, it has evidently nothing laudable in itself, but is merely wisdom or folly, resolution or obstinacy, right or wrong, courage or cowardice, according to the circumstances under which it is exercised. It would appear then, from our survey of those qualities which have been designated "intellectual virtues," that whatever virtue appertains to them is not intellectual, but moral; not of the head, but of the heart. They are means employed, under the impulse of some strong inclination of our nature, with a view to its gratification; and they can only become objects of our praise or censure, by referring to the inclinations from which they take their source, and the gratifications which are contemplated. And, since such is indisputably the case, can we suppose that a range of our faculties, which are incapable of any substantive virtue, which when occupied in the same operation, or following the course of the same habits, may be either well or ill employed according to the disposition of the will that guides them, and which have no goodness but by reflexion, can be the sacred seat of the image of God, whose very nature is goodness itself?

And, finally, if the divine similitude we bear within

us was to be discovered in the intellect, it would seem to follow, as an inevitable consequence, that the virtues of the heart would be commensurate with the endowments of the mind; that the man, who was most eminent for the powers of his understanding, would also be most conspicuous for the righteousness of his character; and that, in proportion as the mental faculties, either in individuals or societies, became cultivated; those moral qualities, which bear the nearest affinity to the divine attributes, would be gradually developed and brought forth into more prominent and effective action. But how is such a view supported by experience in regard to individuals? Does not the whole range of authentic biography assure us, that there is no such necessary alliance between great talent and great goodness? May we not, on the contrary, from that fruitful source of information rather learn, that, by some strange perversion, a superiority of mental power is more frequently found, like a luminous vapour of the earth, a light calculated to mislead, than, like a star in heaven, a light fixed and permanent, which may be safely followed as a guide? .. May it not be remarked, that, in proportion as the mental faculties are more quick and vivid, the passions are more sudden and excessive; that genius, which acquires an ascendancy over all other things, is itself only too frequently the dupe and sport of its own rash impulses; and that he, whose talents have raised him above the ordinary ranks of his fellow men by the possession of an in-

tellectual superiority, is very often condemned to plead the delusion, attendant on these gifts of nature, in extenuation of the guilty extravagances of conduct, which have degraded him to a moral inferiority? And, if we turn our view from individuals to society, we shall certainly not discover, that its improvement in holiness and righteousness has any immediate connexion with its improvement in arts and sciences, or that the divine image is rendered more distinctly visible on the public character, as the mists of ignorance are dissipated from the public mind. The world existed two thousand years from the Fall to the Deluge, and the brief chronicle of that age assures us¹, that intellectual cultivation was constantly in progress; that men abandoned the wild and erratic manners of savage life, and concentrated themselves in cities; that they were skilled in the arts which afford convenience to life; and that they were familiar with the sciences, by which it is refined; but that, all the while, their wickedness acquired a darker and more deadly character as their civilization advanced; till, at length, on account of the enormity of their offences, "the Lord repented him that he had made man"², and exterminated the guilty race by a righteous and indignant judgment. Another two thousand years elapsed, during which mankind were left to refine and improve themselves, by the diligent exertion of their mental powers. They did not

¹ See Genesis iv. 17, 21, 22.

² Genesis vi. 6.

abuse the opportunity. They stretched every faculty to the utmost. They produced works, which exist among us, as objects of wonder and admiration, to the present hour. But sin and civilisation marched on, hand in hand, and with equal steps together. And when “in the fulness of time,” the Messiah descended upon earth on his mission of redeeming love, if the human mind was cultivated to a higher pitch than it had ever previously attained, the human heart had also sunk to a lower depth of iniquity; and mankind had reached that state of deadly sin, in which, “professing themselves to be wise they became as fools³,” and had drawn down upon themselves that appalling judgment, which God inflicts on the most wilful and presumptuous sinners, when he “gives them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient⁴.”

According to the history of every nation, that has hitherto risen, and flourished, and declined, it would appear, that luxury, demoralization, and decay, are always the natural fruits which grow upon the tree of knowledge.—It should be the constant subject of our prayers, that the holy influences of faith in the Gospel may so purify the effects of extended intellectual culture among ourselves, as to ward off that fearful destiny from our nation, by which every other, that has preceded us in the same course, has perished. But it is a destiny from which the sanc-

³ Romans i. 22.

⁴ Romans i. 28.

tifying power of Christianity alone can save us. And, as long as we learn, from our observation both of individuals and masses of men, that intellect and goodness are things so absolutely distinguished from each other; that in individuals, great talents afford no assurance of great virtues, nor any protection against great sins; and that, in societies, the culture of the understanding alone does not necessarily conduce to any increase of righteousness, but is too frequently followed by a diametrically opposite result; it seems impossible to believe that the divine image can be resident in the mental faculties. We are absolutely compelled to conclude that a region of our souls, which is, in its original condition, a mere collection of blank and uninformed energies; which owes all the knowledge it can boast of to the tutorage of the senses, and the impressions made upon them by material things; which moves towards its object with a slow, hesitating, and laborious step; and, at last, very frequently only attains by chance the truth that it had sought in vain to acquire by discourse of reason; which exists in subjection to the passions and the appetites of our nature, with the curse of Canaan upon it, "a servant of servants unto its brethren;" which, from its very position in the constitution of our being, as a counsellor and contriver to effect the purposes of the will, is absolutely incapable of any independent virtue; which, in its most eminent condition of natural quickness and penetration, does not necessarily prompt to good; and, in its more culti-

vated state, only too frequently inclines the more to evil :—to a region of our souls, which, holding an intermediate position between our moral faculties and our animal appetites, always appears to cling with so much more tenacity and affection to the interests of the lower, than of the higher, properties of our nature, it were absurd to direct our attention with the hope of discovering there the lingering traits of the divine similitude, after which we were created. Our intellectual faculties may afford an instrument for giving effect to the designs of some higher principle, in which the image of God consists ; but they could never of themselves constitute that image.

Since such, then, is the case ; since we should look in vain for this holy endowment of our being in the intellectual faculties of our souls, there only remain the moral faculties to be investigated ; and since we know that the divine likeness in which we were created is still resident within us, to that part of our nature we may turn with a full conviction, that, whatever may be the result of our present humble and earnest inquiry, the object of our search does there certainly maintain its hallowed and retired seat. To that element of our nature we will direct our attention in my next discourse, with the hope of distinguishing the living energy in the human breast, which reflects the likeness of the God who made us. I am not aware of any fact connected with the welfare of his spiritual life, which it can be of greater

consequence for man to know. That endowment ought to be reverenced as the sovereign principle of our being. It should be invested with an undisputed dominion over every other faculty we possess. It should retain the body with its appetites, the mind with its various powers, the heart with its passions and affections, as its loyal tributaries. It should in all things stand in the place of the will, and should itself be subject to no control, except from those hallowed precepts, which are given for its guidance in the revealed wisdom of the Book of God. But more: to the preservation and cultivation of this holy principle it is, that all our most earnest endeavours should be directed. To guard it from all attaint; to prevent its perishing from inaction; to assist its development by the studies and contemplations which are in harmony with its holy nature; and to invigorate and discipline its active energies amid the pursuits by which it may, at the same time, be employed and gratified, should become the objects of our deepest attention and solicitude. The accomplishment of our other faculties should be regarded not merely as a secondary, but almost as an immaterial consideration, when compared with the improvement of this higher gift. By our proficiency in the learning and the philosophy of the world, we can only hope to emulate the perishable distinctions of those among our fellow-creatures, who have preceded us on the course of fame; while by the due and fostering care which we bestow on this holier

principle of our nature, we obey the Apostle's exhortation of "going on unto perfection⁵;" we are gradually fulfilling the lofty destiny to which we are called; we are preparing ourselves for heaven; we are becoming "perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect⁶;" and we are, by giving day by day a more distinct impression to the image of God upon our souls, affording a more conclusive evidence to our own hearts, and to our fellow Christians, of the fact of our adoption among the children of God.

⁵ Hebrews vi. 1.

⁶ St. Matthew v. 48.

SERMON II.

THE IMAGE OF GOD IN MAN.

GENESIS i. 27.

"God created man in his own image."

IN the course of our last reflexions on these words, having established, on the clearest authority of holy writ, that the divine likeness in which our first parents were created was not forfeited at the Fall, but is still inherited by their descendants, we entered into a survey of the various elements of which human nature is composed, with a view of discovering to which portion of it we might carry our investigation with the fairest hopes of being able to trace the hallowed lineaments of that likeness. Regarding man as constituted of body and of soul, partly material, partly spiritual, we saw that it would not only be absurd, but would be an approximation to impiety, to search for this higher principle of his being in the

material structure of his body and the appetites which appertain to it. We then directed our observation to the human soul. Here, looking to that distinction between the different faculties of the soul, which is as clearly known from internal experience to all, who have given any attention to the subject, as the distinction between the body and the soul itself—I mean the distinction between its intellectual and its moral faculties—we endeavoured, at some length, to shew what grounds there were for rejecting the supposition that any trace of the divine image might be discerned in the first of these departments of our spiritual being. And we concluded, that, since this high and ennobling endowment is still resident within us; since it is not to be sought for in the body, but in the soul; and since, of the soul, it is not to be found in the intellectual faculties; it must, necessarily, be an attribute of the moral faculties. To the moral faculties then we turn, with a full conviction that, whatever may be the result of our present humble but earnest inquiries, whether they lead to a successful or an unsuccessful issue—the sacred object of our research does there certainly maintain its seat, and that, in entering upon this track of our investigation, we have at least the possibility of a prosperous result to cheer us upon our course.

In the prosecution of this part of our task, I take a bold, I trust not a presumptuous position. It is not my intention to lay any stress upon the corruption which those moral faculties have undergone. I

shall keep the deterioration they have suffered purposely out of sight. I shall not call upon you to gaze upon the fragments of a wreck, and then infer, from the skill exhibited in the fragments, the wonderful contrivance of the entire vessel. I shall not call upon you, as one exploring the ruins of some metropolis of classic times, to observe the towering heights of palaces in decay, the massive strength of bulwarks mouldering into dust, or the symmetry of gorgeous temples of which the columns lie overthrown and half buried in the sands; and then demand your admiration of the wealth, the strength, the beauty, which such a city must have once possessed, before war and time and vice had blasted it, and the slowly receding tide of civilization had left it stranded in the solitudes of the wilderness. I shall not call upon you to contemplate the ravages which sin, hereditary and personal, has occasioned in the condition of man's moral nature, and then, speculating from such faint relics of its nobler qualities as may yet remain, on what it might possibly have been in its state of original perfection, set up the portrait of my imagination as that holy similitude of the Deity in which we were created, and require you to admire its beauty and to mourn over its destruction. No: I am content to take human nature as it is. I admit the extensive ruin it has undergone. I am deeply conscious of the injury it has incurred. But, on the present occasion, I will not avail myself of these considerations. I will look to man, as he now exists, in all his weak-

ness and corruption ; and to God, as He is presented to our adoration, all great and good and glorious, in the declarations of Scripture, and the sensible manifestation of His nature afforded by the incarnation of His Son ; and I shall endeavour to shew, that, immeasurable as is the distance by which they are separated, infinite as is the excellence of the Creator, and miserable as is the frailty of the creature, a distinct likeness may be traced between them ; and that that likeness subsists between the attribute of the Almighty, which is set most prominently forward in the Bible, and a moral endowment, which has been imparted to the soul of man.

What is the divine attribute, for which the holy Scriptures have most studiously endeavoured to excite our veneration ? It is the attribute of Love. "God," says St. John, "is love ?" By these words the Apostle does not signify that the other adorable perfections which are ascribed to the Almighty are, in any degree, lost and absorbed in this ; or that they are not so immediately appertaining to His nature ; or that they are less deserving the reverence of His family upon earth ; but he declares that love is, as it were, the distinguishing characteristic of His essence ; the reason by which His wisdom, His power and His justice act ; the ruling motive by which the course of His providence is swayed, in carrying on the government of the mighty fabric of the universe. "God is

⁷ 1 John iv. 8.

love." To whatever source of information we may address ourselves, to acquire a knowledge of the nature of the Deity, the same conclusion forces itself upon us. If we consider our own existence upon earth, and the various means of enjoyment with which we are so abundantly surrounded ; we can conceive no mode of accounting to ourselves why such things should be, but by supposing a principle of love actively influencing the omnipotent Artificer, and prompting Him to the creation of sentient and intelligent beings who were capable of receiving happiness, and of the objects from which their happiness might be received. That there is a world so fruitful and so beautiful, and that man is placed in it as its tenant, assure us that "God is love." There are, indeed, occasional interruptions to the course of our well-being ; but they are few and brief, and they bear no comparison with the long seasons of delightful tranquillity enjoyed by those who serve God and obey His laws. But still this earth is not a place of uninterrupted gratification. Life has its tears as well as smiles, its cares as well as joys ; and the mere speculative deist might perchance be bewildered at the contemplation of such a state of things. With no instructor but his reason to interpret to him the latent counsels of the Almighty, he might be induced to doubt the perfection of the divine goodness, and to question whether some attribute, of a character more austere than love, may not exercise an influence in the operations of His providence. But to all those

who are really Christians, who have not only the works but the word of God to afford them light and information respecting the nature of their Author and the purpose of His dispensations, no such difficulty presents itself. They contemplate every occurrence which befalls them, as it bears upon the whole scope of their existence both present and to come. They perceive that many an occurrence, which seems calamitous, when viewed with reference to their temporal welfare as sojourners in this world, is of most beneficial consequence, when viewed with reference to their eternal welfare as inheritors of the next. Blest with the Bible for their guide, they try their heavenly Father's dealings towards His children by a higher test than that of their present prosperity. They contemplate the various events of their existence in connexion with the improvement of their moral nature. They consider them as conducing to the suppression of unrighteous passions, and to the cultivation of holy dispositions; and they are assured that, in the distribution of weal or woe, of health or sickness, of reward or chastisement, of blessing or of affliction, though both good and evil are equally administered by the hand of God, in the administration both of evil and of good, God is invariably love. But yet another, and even a more conclusive testimony, has been afforded us to this momentous truth. The Son of God has appeared incarnate upon earth. We are assured, that "in Him dwelt the fulness of

the Godhead bodily⁸,” and that, through the veil of the human nature which He assumed, was evinced “the brightness of the glory of God, and the express image of His person⁹. ” And what is the character of the moral image of the Most High, which was presented to our contemplation in the words and in the actions of our Saviour? If in Him “dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily;” what did the very purpose for which He humbled Himself to take our infirmities upon Him distinctly manifest? What did the whole course of His life, from the manger at Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary, declare to us? What instruction do we draw from the sum of the condensed wisdom contained in His precepts and in His parables,—from the tenderness which He evinced towards His friends,—from the prayers which He uttered for His enemies—from the merciful exhortations to repentance with which He so repeatedly appealed to the hostile inhabitants of Jerusalem; from the tears He shed at the contemplation of the destruction that awaited their impenitence; from the sufferings which He voluntarily endured for the redemption of this sinful world, and from that new commandment which He left, as a parting legacy, to direct the conduct of His disciples? What is the import of these intimations? What lesson do we derive from these manifold and intelligible notices

⁸ Col. ii. 9.

⁹ Heb. i. 3.

respecting the nature of the Godhead with which He was instinct?—My brethren, what is, what can be, the substance of the communication they convey to us, but another, fuller, clearer, more emphatic announcement of the great and affecting fact, that “God is love?”

But, since such is the nature of the Deity, man, who is formed after His likeness, ought in his nature to have some impression corresponding with it. If Love be the attribute by which the Creator is distinguished, the creature, who is made in His image, must be endowed with some principle which answers to that attribute, or the image could not exist. Have we such a quality? Are our hearts the abode of any sentiment, wholly apart and distinct from all taint of grosser passion, which, operating as the attribute of Love does in the Divine breast, excites and animates us in the pursuit of the good of others; which finds a satisfaction in diffusing happiness; which looks beyond itself, and its mere personal well-being, for a more generous range of gratification; which derives a joy from the prospect of another's joy, and thrills with the agony of another's pain? Is there in the soul of man an impression of benevolence, of compassion, of sympathy,—it matters not how we name it, for the terms are but descriptive of different phases of the same sentiment,—in which the lingering traces of the Divine image may be discerned?

This is a question of very great importance; and,

in entering upon the consideration of it, I would observe, that it is one which can never be proved immediately by reason. "It is," says Bishop Butler¹, "a mere question of fact, or natural history, and is therefore to be judged of and determined, in the same way that other facts and matters of natural history are, by appealing to the external senses, or inward perceptions respectively, as the matter under consideration is cognizable by one or the other." Now, in the present case we can appeal to both these sources of information, to our own internal perceptions, and to the report of our external senses. And what is the intelligence they convey to us? If we look first to ourselves, does not the experience of our whole lives conduce to a daily strengthening conviction of the existence of a principle of benevolence in the soul? Whence did we derive our support in infancy, but from the gratuitous resources of our parents' love? Has such an affection ever ceased, from the moment it nursed us into consciousness, to maintain an important influence over our actions? In our childhood, did not all the efforts of our dawning powers look for their reward in a mother's caresses, or a father's smiles? In our school-boy triumphs, was that the happiest moment, when the prize was first bestowed, and the voice of praise rung thrillingly on the ear, and the personal vanity was gratified; or did the pulse beat highest, and the

¹ Works, vol. ii. p. 6. Oxford Ed.

flushed cheek glow deepest, on witnessing the pleasure which, when the holidays returned, its exhibition excited in the dear inmates of our home? In our riper youth, amid the arduous studies which are preparatory to the active business of life, do any look forward to the moment, when they shall begin to reap the fruits of their diligence, with a design of squandering them altogether upon themselves? Do not all, on the contrary, anticipate it as the time, when they shall be enabled to confer benefits on those they love? When one hopes to acquire the means of lessening the privations of a widowed mother, another to afford independent protection to an orphan sister, and a third to contribute to the comforts of his family; or, at all events, relieve the domestic income from the oppressive charges of his support? In matured manhood, when the concerns of the world are strenuously entered upon, how many are there—are there any?—who undergo its anxieties and labours, only that they may gather fortunes for themselves, and whose industry and prudence are not exerted, under the influence of the benevolent affections, for the support and provision of those, in whom their affections are interested?—And, in old age, when the period of toil has passed; when we return again to a state of dependence as entire, and of infirmity more grievous, than that from which in infancy we started; what resources have we to look to for its stay and comfort, but those which God, “who is love,” has, by the merciful direction of His pro-

vidence, secured to us in the succouring love of our kindred and our friends? Love, in its purest sense, is so fixed a principle of human nature, that all his lifetime, from the cradle to the grave, man is always either indebted for his happiness to its effect on others, or is actuated by its influence in endeavouring to produce happiness for them. So essential an endowment is it, that the soul is afflicted with a painful sense of void, unless it has an object to exercise its living energies, and to become the depository of its benefits:—and human language can convey no stronger a representation of human suffering, than to say of one of the stricken members of our race, “He is a solitary being; he has nobody to love; he has nobody to love him.” This may be affirmed of an individual possessing every other means of happiness, which wealth, rank, power, fame, talent, may accumulate around him; and yet we overlook these advantages, which we are in general very apt to appreciate too highly; and, if there be none who are dear to him, none to whom he is dear, we pronounce him, on that account alone, to be a man miserable in his generation. And, on the other hand, if a person be depressed in fortune, baffled in his honourable exertions, and defeated in his fairest prospects; however we may pity and condole with him, do we not consider that he is richly compensated for all, if his friends abide by him in his misfortunes, and if he is happy in the affections of his home?—But does not that proof of the existence of a principle of bene-

volence in the human breast, which is to be derived from internal consciousness, extend still farther than this? Do we not feel within ourselves, that its operation is not limited to the narrow circle of the domestic hearth, and exclusively confined to those, who are connected with us by the ties of kindred blood and familiar association? Its strongest force is there. It is in that happy school drawn forth and educated. It is from learning there by what means the sentiment is grieved, or cheered, that we attain a knowledge of what others feel, and are rendered capable of an enlightened sympathy. But it is not constrained within any bounds thus narrow. It holds all, which appertains to man, and his weal or woe, a matter of deep moment. In the involuntary emotions of compassion, it inspires our breast with an interest, more or less acute, in the fortunes of every individual of our race; and, to use the words of Adam Smith², "renders his happiness necessary to us, though we derive nothing from it, except the pleasure of seeing it."

But, if we turn from our own internal perceptions to look around us for information on this subject, we shall find most sufficient reasons for believing that

² "How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others when we either see it, or are made to conceive it, in a very lively manner."—*Moral Sentiment*, pt. 1. sec. 1.

what we experience in ourselves is not peculiar to ourselves ; and that a principle of love, gradually diffusing itself around in lighter feelings of good will, as the circle of social life becomes extended to a greater distance from the centre of our hearths, does really constitute an important essential in the moral character of our race. We know, that such words as "benevolence," "compassion," "sympathy," are in universal use, and that they are universally understood. We perceive that the sentiment which they represent is universally appealed to, and is universally confided in. We may learn, from a very little consideration, that to it all the most awakening appeals of the orator, all the noblest strains of the poet, all the most arduous labours of the artist, are addressed ; and that, without it, their power would be lost. We observe that its agency is calculated upon, as a thing of very wide and extensive influence, by all who have studied the main-springs of human conduct, with the desire of guiding them for their own advantage. It is the good and fruitful ground, to which every pretender looks for his harvest. It is assumed as the most attractive and least suspicious mask by the hypocrite. It is drawn upon, as a secure and inexhaustible fund, by the impostor. And we may be assured, if we are content to derive our knowledge of mankind from personal experience and not from the writers of romance, that, though many may have greatly weakened the native energies, and though some may have almost suppressed the gentle impulses,

of benevolence within them, few indeed are the individuals of our race, by whom the principle has altogether been extinguished ; and that, even with the coldest and the hardest natures among us, there scarcely passes an hour of the day, in which its influence upon them is not evinced in some less obvious form of consideration or forbearance. The operation of the instinct may be obscured from our view, by the effects of unkindly culture, of morose manners, or of stern dispositions ; but, like the sun amid the darkness of a polar winter, it nevertheless exists, and sheds that vital warmth about the soul which prevents its chilling into the utter death of selfishness.

But admitting, as I believe all do, its presence and its sway in the human heart, there is a peculiar class of minute inquirers who insist, that benevolence is not an original impression of our nature, but a certain more subtle modification of self-love, to which, with a perverse and malicious ingenuity, they would fain reduce every generous emotion we are conscious of. It is pretended that, by some unaccountable internal operation, the sympathy we experience in the happiness of others, is no more than a kind of offshoot from the delight we take in our own ; that the compassion we feel for their afflictions is, in the same manner, no more than a result from the fearful thought of what we should suffer in their place ; and that, in fact, all those estimable feelings which we are accustomed, according to the common language, and the common sense of mankind, to ascribe to benevolence,

as an independent impression of our souls, are produced, without the interposition of any such impression, by a lively exercise of the imagination on our selfishness. Now, though it may be quite sufficient to dismiss this question as Hume has done, and say³, “It is needless to push our researches so far as to ask, why we have humanity or a fellow-feeling with others. It is sufficient that this is experienced to be a principle in human nature. We must stop somewhere in our examination of causes, and there are, in every science, some general principles, beyond which we cannot hope to find any principle more general; no man is absolutely indifferent to the happiness and misery of others. The first has a natural tendency to give pleasure; the second, pain. This every one may find in himself. And it is not probable, that these principles can be resolved into principles more simple and universal, whatever attempts may have been made for that purpose.”— Though in these words, Hume may be considered as having brought the controversy to a fair conclusion; yet I cannot forbear observing, that, if benevolence had no independent existence; if it were, as is argued, nothing more than a certain modest, refined, and sublimated form of selfishness; the consequences, which we might expect to follow, would be precisely such, as all our ordinary experience contradicts. If compassion for the distressed were nothing more

³ See *Principles of Morals.* Sect. 5. note CC

than a painful impression on the imagination of what we should ourselves endure under similar circumstances, its natural effect would be the very reverse of what we see. It would lead us to avoid the scenes, in which such a feeling could be excited, which compassion does not; and, instead of inclining us to assist the wretched, it would urge us to expel all remembrance of them from our minds with shuddering and aversion, which compassion does not. Or, again, if the kindly sympathy, which we are conscious of in the prosperity of others, were no more than a reflection on the delight which we should ourselves experience under similar circumstances, it would seem to follow, as a necessary consequence, that the man, whose affections were most engrossed by the treasures of the world, who entertained the highest estimation of their value, and who luxuriated most freely in all the enjoyments they can supply, would, of all others, be most conspicuous for his interest in the welfare of his fellow-creatures, and most zealous in his endeavours to secure to them a share of the advantages which he prized. According to such a theory, the love which every man bore his neighbour, would be commensurate with the love he bore himself. Every man's sympathy would be in proportion to his selfishness:—a conclusion which, I believe, we shall, with one accord, agree in rejecting as contrary to our experience. That principle of benevolence, from which our compassion for the distressed, and our sympathy with the happy, flow,

may, very probably, be excited by a certain involuntary thought of what we should ourselves feel in a similar situation; but such a thought would be the reason for, and the measure of, the emotion we experienced, not the source of it, and could never be followed by any effective sense of interest in others, unless there were resident within us a principle of benevolence to be excited by it. For the complete exposure, however, of the more ingenious sophistries which have been hazarded on this subject, I would refer you to the notes of the first and fifth sermons of Bishop Butler⁴—but I must, at the same time, intimate, that no such formal refutation will be required to satisfy the mind of any man, who honestly consults his own consciousness. We may all learn, that the sentiment by which we sympathise in the joys and sorrows of our fellow-creatures, and the feeling which gives us an interest in our own, are perfectly distinct and separate, and incapable of being identified; if we will but listen to the clear and simple voice of nature. If we will but attend to the plain evidence she has to give, without attempting, by a course of subtle cross-examination, to betray her into contradictions, for the sake of extorting something from her, which

⁴ I do not print these notes, as I had at first intended; because the Works of Butler is a book which no man, who, either as a Christian or a metaphysician, has an interest in the state and destiny of the human race, ought to be without.

may tend to the support of our own fanciful theories, we shall learn, that the two impressions are different in every particular; that they emanate from a different source; that they act upon different motives; that they have a view to different results; that they derive a different kind of satisfaction from success; that they suffer a different kind of grief from disappointment; and that it is impossible for any subtle alchemy of metaphysics so far to transmute their distinctive qualities, as to reduce them to the same element.

But if such be, indeed, the case; if, in the words of St. Chrysostom, "God hath implanted in our nature a charm, which binds us to love one another⁵"; if, among the moral faculties of the human soul, we can really distinguish the existence of a principle, which, apart from all immediate self-enjoyment, is gratified by the sight of happiness, and derives satisfaction from assisting in the diffusion of it; which, apart from all immediate self-suffering, is pained at the sight of grief, and anxious to mitigate its pressure, who can doubt but that, in this endowment of our nature, there may be clearly discerned a likeness to that love, which is the attribute of God most earnestly presented to our adoration in the Bible? In this then, I conceive, consists that Divine image, in which we were created. "God," says St. John, "is love." Man is instinct with a sentiment corres-

⁵ Homily on Ephesians, i. 41.

ponding to that love ; and, as that sentiment is active or dormant, cultivated or suppressed, the likeness of God, after which he was made, becomes visible or overshadowed, is rendered prominent, or is obliterated.

But, my brethren, I apprehend that this original impression of our souls does not only convey a resemblance of the Divine nature ; but that it is the effect of a Divine illumination. My grounds for entertaining such an opinion are derived from scriptural intimations. St. John assures us, that not only was the world and all that it contains made by the Son of God⁶, but also adds, that “ He is the light of men.” Now, the word light is never used by the Apostle to designate the intellectual faculty, or what we call the light of reason. But it is always employed by him to denote spiritual light : and, as he further states, that the Son of God “ enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world⁷.” I conclude, therefore, on what appears to be the clearly expressed authority of St. John, that a certain measure of the illumination of the Holy Spirit of Christ is dispensed, as the high privilege and distinction of their nature, to every member of the human race. But what is the effect of the illumina-

⁶ St. John i. 3, 4. “ All things were made by him ; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

⁷ St. John i. 9.

tion of the Spirit on the soul? The Scriptures, I think, will lead us to conclude, that, in all His ordinary operations, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart is evinced in love. The words of St. John are, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God⁸;" and, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us⁹." And to the same effect we find, that St. Paul, when writing in the Epistle to the Galatians¹, of the grace of the Holy Spirit and its fruits; and when writing in the first Epistle to the Corinthians², of the most excellent gift of love and its effects, identifies the two by ascribing precisely the same attributes to each; as if, in his view, love was the sole fruit of the Spirit, and all other graces were the fruit of love. Since, then, we are assured by the Holy Scriptures, that "every man that cometh into the world is enlightened by the Spirit of Christ;" since we learn, on the same authority, that the fruit of the enlightenment of that Spirit is love; and since we know, from the experience of our own hearts, and observation of the conduct of our fellow-creatures, that a sentiment of benevolence corresponding to that love, is an original principle of human nature; I consider myself warranted in inferring, that that principle, so corresponding with the fruit of the Holy Spirit, derives its hallowed origin from that portion of

⁸ 1 John iv. 7.

¹ Gal. v. 22, 23.

⁹ 1 John iv. 12.

² 1 Cor. xiii. 4. et seq.

Christ's Spirit which is conferred "on every man that cometh into the world;" and that the impression of our souls, in which we discover the lineaments of the Divine likeness, is also the effect of Divine illumination. Such a conclusion, indeed, is almost forced upon us by the historical account of the formation of Adam. We may learn from a collation of the expressions there used, that his likeness to God consisted in some gift of the Spirit of God. Moses has twice described the manner of Adam's creation, once in the first, and again in the second, chapter of Genesis. In the former, we read that, "God created man in his own image³"; in the latter, we read that "God," after forming man of the dust of the ground, "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life⁴." It would seem then, that these phrases are equivalent; and that the *image of God* in the first passage, corresponds with the "*breath of God*" in the second. Now, we are told of another occasion on which this act was repeated. Our Saviour, the incarnate Son of God, after His resurrection, appeared to His disciples, and "breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost⁵." And if the communication of divine grace to the soul was the design and effect of the latter act, may we not reasonably infer that it was also the design and effect of the former; and that the "*likeness to God*" which Adam received when God "breathed" on him, consisted in

³ Genesis i. 27.

⁴ Genesis ii. 7.

⁵ St. John xx. 22.

such a spiritual enlightenment, as the Apostles received, when they were breathed on by the Messiah?

I shall in my next discourse call your attention to an important consequence to be drawn from the conclusion at which we have arrived. But, before we part, let me exhort you to hold dear and cherish this highest, this divine endowment of your souls. In it, is present that image of God, in which our first parents were created. As we, by due care and discipline, refine and cultivate it, we render that holy image more distinct; and we grow more and more near to the perfect resemblance of God. Attend to the warning of your Saviour—of Him, by whose Holy Spirit you are enlightened, and “take heed, that the light which is in thee be not darkness.” Remember that the existence of that light in the soul, is not compatible with the indulgence of any description of habitual and presumptuous sin. The kind of wickedness would appear to be of immaterial consideration. The grace of charity perishes at the contaminating touch of all. The life of voluptuous idleness, and the habit of luxurious self-indulgence, have as certain an influence in hardening the heart, as the courses of violence or rapine. The commission of every manner of iniquity conduces to the same result. It tends to the cultivation of selfishness. It engenders a craving

* St. Luke xi. 35.

eagerness for the gratification of our own inclinations; a disregard for every man's interest, who at all interferes with our desires; the suppression of the emotions of benevolence; the ultimate obliteration of the image of God. Having attained this condition,—having become destitute of all feeling of sympathy,—having rendered yourself dead to its impulses and incapable of its delights, you will begin, as all the children of this world do, to blaspheme its operation. We shall then hear you depreciating the highest principle in the soul of man, and justifying your own narrow practices, on the plea, that benevolence is no more than selfishness in a particular form; that he, who is influenced by it, is no better than yourself; that the only difference between you is one of taste; and that, since, like yourself, he only follows the course which pleases him the best, he can have no more merit than you have in following yours. Such are the sophistical arguments, with which all of us must be familiar: arguments by which vice and virtue, good and evil, the Samaritan and the Levite, Jesus and Barabbas, are reduced to a common level, and presented before us, not as objects equally deserving either of approbation or disapprobation, but as things to be regarded with the same cold, dull, miserable indifference. But where is the reason on which such arguments are based? They tell us that both lines of conduct are equally selfish; and that consequently there can be no more merit in one than

in the other. Now, first, with regard to the assumed fact, that both are equally selfish. Be it so—I will not dispute the application of the epithet. If the imperfection of human language be, indeed, so great, as not to afford us any word, by which to distinguish the satisfaction of those who find their happiness in doing good, from the satisfaction of those who find their happiness in doing evil; if the motives which influence the youth, who denies himself the ordinary indulgences of his age, with a view of devoting the fulness of his faculties to the prosecution of those studies, in which he knows that his proficiency will delight the hearts of the inmates of his home; and the motives of his dissolute companion, who abandons himself to the pursuit of such indulgences, without any concern for the blighted hopes, the parental tears, the domestic embarrassments, perchance, which follow his extravagances; if things so opposite must, by the use of a common term, be included in the same category:—or if, in humble life, the hard-earned gratification which a mother feels, while striving with her weakness and her difficulties to provide for the sustenance of her children, and the base gratification of the father, whose debaucheries have sunk his family in ruin and disgrace, cannot be discriminated by any mode of speech:—if both are to be alike designated as selfish, because both alike conduce to self-satisfaction; we must be content to allow the epithet. But such an admission will not alter the radical

differences subsisting in the things themselves ; nor bring them in the least degree nearer to each other ; nor render the one less amiable, or the other less odious. But is it true, that acts of goodness and benevolence, to whatever extent we may follow our own inclination in effecting them, do really partake of any taint of selfishness ? Are not persons betrayed into the mistake of supposing that they do, by laying too much stress upon etymology ? They know that *selfishness* is a derivation from *self*, and hence they learnedly infer, that whatever action tends in any way to give pleasure to oneself, must of necessity fall under that appellation. But they forget that derivatives do not always retain the full latitude of their roots. " Every man," observes the author of the Light of Nature⁷, " is not designated as *bookish*, who occasionally amuses himself with a book ; neither is every man to be called *selfish*, who in some respects has a consideration for himself. Selfishness does not consist in having no regard for oneself, but in having no regard for any body besides." Such is the conclusion of the common sense of mankind. Despising all metaphysical subtleties, it has determined the broad distinction which subsists between such actions as tend to the benefit of our fellow-creatures, and such as only tend to our personal advantage. It approves the one, as disinterested ; it condemns the other, as selfish. And,

⁷ Chapter xxxiv.

instead of finding any grounds for extenuating the praise of benevolence, on account of the satisfaction which accompanies the practice of it, that very circumstance has been regarded as an enhancement of its value. We find in it an assurance that the principle, which inspires us to do good and to delight in doing it; to diffuse happiness around us and to derive our own happiness in diffusing it, bears, indeed, in its source, its operation, and its effects, the clear traces of that likeness to God, after which we were created. But it is maliciously demanded, If there be this pleasure in benevolence, where can be its merit? My brethren, the benevolent lay claim to no merit. They know and acknowledge that it is the grace of God, which prompts them to such deeds; that it is the grace of God, which, in the peace of conscience, accords to them the accompanying reward. In performing them, they act on the impulse of the highest principle of the human soul; and, if you will, with a view to the purest and most heavenly of all temporal enjoyments. But, though they have no merit, though they disclaim all merit in thus following the dictates of their nature, what can be said of the demerits of that man, who is dead to all such dictates, and who has no perception of the inward recompence to which they lead? What can be said of him, but that he is a creature degraded from the dignity to which his Creator had appointed him; that he is bereaved of the best gift which has been conferred upon his race; that he has failed to

keep alive and to improve the highest moral faculty of his soul; that he has, instead, fostered into an inordinate growth the principles which are most opposed to it; and that he has lost in the reprobation of vanity, ambition, avarice, and sensuality, that illumination of the grace of Christ, which, "enlightening every man that cometh into the world," imparts to the soul of man a principle of brotherly love, which bears the impress of the image of God, who "is love?" That we may be preserved from so destitute and lost a state, that we may retain and render ever more and more distinct in our hearts that Divine image after which we were made, let us continually, in our prayers, address our earnest supplications to the Almighty, who has taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth, to send His Holy Spirit, and to pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before Him.

SERMON III.

THE IMAGE OF GOD IN MAN.

GENESIS i. 27.

“ God created man in his own image.”

I HAVE attempted, in my two previous discourses, to trace in the soul of man the lineaments of that Divine image, after which he was originally created. And, unless our investigations have been altogether defeated in their object, we have shown, that that image may distinctly be discerned. We found it in the likeness subsisting between that attribute of love, which is set before us in the Bible as constituting, in some more especial manner, the nature of the Deity, and a principle of benevolence, which has been imparted to the human race, as one of the instinctive impressions of their nature.

Assuming that, hitherto, our superstructure has been raised on a secure foundation, I propose, in my present discourse, to call your attention to a conse-

quence of some moment, which must necessarily follow from the conclusion at which we have arrived. If there really exists in the human breast such an endowment as we conceive it to possess ; we discover in that endowment a principle, which must exercise over every man the influence of a moral sense ; which must, to a certain degree, render the apprehension of right and wrong intuitive to him ; which must naturally dispose him to prefer virtue to vice, and to do good rather than harm to his fellow-creatures ; and which corresponds, to the fullest extent of the expression, with what St. Paul has designated “the Law of God written on the heart⁸:” for it is the first faint glimpse of that law of love inculcated by the Gospel ; and, if duly cultivated, and carried out into practice, it would lead to the accomplishment of every moral duty required by the Gospel.

Now, all that popular school of moral teachers, who controvert the existence of a moral sense, have objected, that, if the heart had really inherited any faculty of the kind, its presence would be evinced by the universal acknowledgment and adoption of a distinctly expressed code of moral maxims ; and that such maxims would be intuitively perceived by every individual of our species. This is assumed as an indisputable position. And, then, some of those rules of conduct, which appear to be most self-evident, and most generally assented to, are adduced ; as, for in-

⁸ Rom. ii. 15.

stance, that "it is the duty of every parent to protect his children," or that "a man should do as he would be done by." And it is argued, that, because these rules cannot be found in some such terse and definite manner presented to the understanding of us all, from the first moments of our consciousness, we cannot be endowed by nature with any moral law for the direction of our actions. It is asserted, that we can have no innate moral principle in our hearts, because we have no innate moral maxims impressed upon our minds. But is this a fair conclusion from the premises? Let us examine the validity of this objection. In the first place, are these maxims indispensable requisites of a practical moral principle. What does Locke teach us upon this subject? He informs us⁹, that "nature has put into man a desire of happiness, and an aversion to misery; that these are innate practical principles; and that, as practical principles ought, they do continue constantly to operate, and influence all our actions without ceasing." And I would add, if a *desire of the happiness* of others, as well as of our own, and an *aversion to the misery* of others, as well as to our own, be among the original tendencies put into us by nature,—which our consciousness of what passes within us, and our experience of what takes place around us, would lead us to believe,—if humanity be an essential property of the human heart, it must follow that we possess in such

⁹ Essay on the Human Understanding, b. i. c. 3. 13.

an impression an innate, practical, moral principle ; though it may not reveal itself to our understanding in the form of any ethical apophthegms, but exist as a disposition in the constitution of the moral character of our souls.

Moral maxims, then, we find are not indispensable to the existence of a moral sense. But would they of themselves, and without the assistance of some such predisposition in their favour, as an instinctive benevolence implies, be of any avail in influencing our conduct ? Such maxims are styled practical principles ; but they are only practical, inasmuch as they are principles which may be carried into practice, and which mankind very generally, if not universally, confess ought to be thus practised. But they do not necessarily lead to practice. The mere knowledge of them alone will not, as we learn from constant experience, incline a man to submit to their direction. They are altogether valueless, unless they are received with some kindred disposition of the heart, which assists him in apprehending the wisdom of them, and endows them with an influential power over the will : and we can have no reason for supposing, that, if they had been imparted to the mind by original impression, such a circumstance would have rendered them more effective, unless they were accompanied by some other principle to excite and quicken them. Indeed, I cannot understand by what means we have all attained our conviction, that they ought to be respected, but by the persuasion of some

such innate predisposition in their favour, as that for which we are contending. It would appear that, if they are not intuitively apprehended, they are, from some internal moral conviction, always received as axiomatic when stated. Paley's involuntary admission of this fact is remarkable. He states, in the preface to his Moral Philosophy, that "the experience of nine years in the office of a public tutor in one of the universities, afforded him frequent occasions to observe, that in discoursing to young minds upon topics of morality, it required much more pains to make them perceive the difficulty than to understand the solution: that, unless the subject was so drawn up to a point, as to exhibit the full force of an objection, or the exact place of a doubt, before any explanation was entered upon,—in other words, unless some curiosity was excited before it was attempted to be satisfied, the labour of the teacher was lost." Now, what is the fair inference to be drawn from these words? What does Paley's experience on this subject teach us, but that all young minds do, from some principle of their nature, catch immediately, and without the necessity of any argument, the full import of every moral truth that is presented to them; that before you can make them sensible of there being any difficulty in the matter, you are obliged, in some degree, to sophisticate their original apprehension of what is right; and that you must force a breach in that firm foundation of moral truth, imparted to them by nature, before you can find room

for the introduction of the doubts you wish to solve, and the objections you would fain explain away ? And, I believe, without the intervention of some such principle, it would be as impossible to establish the authority of his moral duties to a man's satisfaction by any process of reasoning, as it would be to enkindle a delight in modulated sounds in one who was stone deaf, by instructing him in the science of music.

But though moral maxims are not, as we have seen, essential to the constitution of a moral sense ; and though, without it, they would prove of no effect ; we are all assured that the course of conduct they direct may be, and continually is, followed out to a very admirable extent by persons who have no knowledge that any moral maxims of the kind are in-existence. How many thousands of mothers are there, in the most destitute and barbarous regions of the earth, availing themselves of every precaution to shelter their infants from the storms of winter and the scorching heats of summer, but who live, and, in all human probability, will die, without ever having heard the moral maxim that "it is the duty of all parents to protect their children?" How many thousand instances have occurred in which a man, seeing his friend involved in danger, has rushed forward at the peril of his life to save him, though he was utterly ignorant of the rule of conduct which prescribes, that "a man should do as he would be done by?" Nobody can deny that such actions are perfectly consistent

with the principles which we observe in daily operation among mankind ; and that they emanate from impulses which may have place in the heart and influence the actions, independently of an acquaintance with those ethical maxims in which the moralist might enounce them. Since then, as it has been shewn, an innate practical moral principle may exist without any such rules ; since, if such rules were impressed upon our minds by nature, that alone would not of necessity lead to the practice of them ; and since, also, the actions prescribed may be, and very often are, practised without a knowledge of the rules ; I cannot conceive why the intuitive and universal perception of any definite maxims of the kind should be required to substantiate the existence of an innate, practical, moral principle. If, indeed, we may be permitted to form any opinion on the subject, from a view of the Almighty's method of dispensing to us the only other blessing, among the myriads He has conferred upon us, which bears any affinity to what we conceive of a moral sense ; it would appear more in harmony with the ordinary counsels of His providence, that such an endowment should manifest itself in the form of an affection, generally diffused over the heart and giving a bias to the will, than in any precepts of morality, distinctly indicated and ineffaceably engraven on the mind. It is thus that the regenerating grace of baptism diffuses its sanctifying influences over the soul of the Christian. The grace of God makes itself felt in a way precisely similar to

that, in which we presume an innate moral sentiment might act. It worketh in us to will what is good. It works by suggesting an inclination to good ; submitting it to our free choice to determine, whether we will or will not follow its suggestions ; and, then, if we should determine righteously, leaving us to discover, by the counsel of our reason, the most ready and certain mode of carrying our good intentions into execution. In the same manner, an innate principle of benevolence, would be an innate practical principle,—and one of very effective and intelligible operation ; though it might not discover itself in any of those clearly defined maxims, which are demanded by a certain school of teachers, as the only evidence, on which they will concede the existence of a moral sense.

But it has been expected, not only that the dictates of the moral sense should be definite, but that they should be uniform. It has been assumed, that, if there really were such a faculty, it would lead to the same opinions respecting the most minute details of right and wrong, among all people of all climates, of all religions, and of all the various stages of civilization. The principal diversities, which have appeared in the moral views of different nations, are then diligently sought out and ingeniously contrasted ; and it is exultingly demanded, How such anomalies are to be accounted for, if mankind were indeed possessed of any internal light to guide their judgments on such matters ? I

do not quite understand in what way the objector supposes that the moral sense would produce this uniformity. If he expects, that it would impress the first rudiments of ethical science on the minds of all and each of us, by a kind of inspiration, there is little doubt but the dictates of such an inspiration would be uniform:—thus, however, the moral sense most assuredly does not act; and, if nothing less will satisfy our adversary, the controversy between us ends in the unreasonable exorbitancy of his demands. If, on the other hand, he conceives, that the moral sense, by its influence on the understanding, would necessarily guide all men, in all conditions of life, to an uniform judgment on the merits of different lines of conduct; we have, I think, the power of showing that he looks for a result, which, from the very nature of the case, was all but impossible to occur. Under such circumstances, a society would, at its commencement, have no moral maxims at all; for actions, good and bad, must precede these reasonings upon conduct, which lead to the formation of rules of morality; as poetry, good and bad, must precede those reasonings upon it, which lead to the construction of canons of criticism:—and when, at length, men did begin to exercise their reason on the subject; it was not likely, that they should every where agree in their conclusions. What is the case with the only analogous endowment we possess? Does the grace of the Holy Spirit always evince its presence by such

an uniformity of views and sentiments? The love of God and man is an affection excited in the heart of the Christian by divine illumination. This is a moral, practical principle: but has it, in all ages and under all circumstances, led those it influenced to the adoption of the same uniform rules of conduct? Have not, on the contrary, the precepts, originating in that holy affection, been found to vary with the lapse of time, the change of manners, and the advance of ethical science? Take an example of such a departure from uniformity of precept. "Give," said the Christians of the first centuries, "to every beggar who asks an alms of you." "Do not give," says the Christian of the present century, "to any beggar who asks an alms of you." Here we have two maxims, which are diametrically opposed to each other, and which, at first sight, would appear incapable of being reduced to the same affection as their source. Yet, when the reason of each is heard, the anomaly disappears; the contradiction is reconciled; and we discover, through the diversity of the maxims, the identity of the principle. "Do give," said the early disciples of the Gospel, "because the distressed suppliant is the child of your heavenly Father; and your Saviour has declared, that, whatsoever you give unto one of the least of these His brethren, is given unto Him." In this case, religious love is the motive for granting the relief. "Do not give," say many of the latter, and not less pious, disciples of the

Gospel, “because, by such indiscriminate alms, you encourage imposition, and defraud of their dues of charity those really suffering poor, in whom your Saviour is most deeply interested.” And, in this case again, religious love is the motive for withholding the relief. It is then evident, that there may be a practical moral principle in man, of which the suggestions may be designed to guide him to what is right; and yet that the maxims, deduced by the reason from its suggestions, may be any thing rather than uniform. Mere diversity of opinion respecting our moral obligations, would not necessarily argue the absence of an innate moral principle; it might only show that, in different schools of experience, men had come to different conclusions with regard to the most efficient method of carrying out its impressions.—But, indeed, would not such a diversity be reasonably expected to exist? The influence of the moral sense in moulding the opinions of mankind, could only be in proportion to its own force, as compared with the forces of its antagonist principles. With regard to the faculty itself, no man has ever been so wild as to imagine, that it was designed to destroy our liberty by superseding the use of the understanding, and overpowering the will, and thus constraining the conduct. It is not a power which *has* the rule over us, but which ought to have the rule. And, if we fairly considered what are its office and position in the human breast, we should find no reason for expecting that its

effects on the human mind would be greater, or more consistent, than they are. The moral sense exists within us, as a still small voice, pleading the cause of strangers, against a multitude of insatiable desires all clamorous for interests of their own : and is it extraordinary, that they should very frequently succeed in obtaining a judgment in their favour ? It is placed in the forefront of the battle, to contest its way, single-handed, against a sturdy throng of opposing passions: ought we to be surprised at its being sometimes most miserably defeated ? Locke admits, that there are moral rules, which, from some cause or other, have obtained an universal adoption among mankind. His words are¹: “There is scarce that principle of morality to be named, or rule of virtue to be thought on, which is not, somewhere or other, slighted and condemned, *those only excepted, which are absolutely necessary to hold society together.*” And, though I think much more than this has always been achieved by the moral sense, still, when we consider what man is, in the absence of true religion, amid the tumult of the passions, under the pressure of strong personal interests, and in the dark night of ignorance, I doubt whether more could reasonably have been anticipated from any original impression towards virtue, which did not materially interfere with our free agency, than that it should constantly have

¹ Essay on the Human Understanding, b. i. c. 3. § 10.

stemmed the strong opposing current of malignant influences, and always have maintained so much moral feeling alive, as, even under the lowest conditions of human existence, would suffice “to hold society together.”

The opponents of a moral sense seem to assume, that it must, on every moral question, be either omnipotent and omniscient, or altogether non-existent. All the arguments, advanced by the impugners of this faculty, are precisely analogous to those, which have been continually advanced by unbelievers against the divine authority of the Gospel. The law of God written on the heart, and the law of God delivered to us by the Messiah, are encountered by a similar description of cavil. The infidel directs our attention to the popular vices and various modes of faith, which unhappily prevail among the nominal disciples of our Saviour, and would fain persuade us, that, because in such particular instances revelation has no apparent influence, it can have no influence at all. “But,” says Montesquieu²; “men may as well object to the efficacy of human laws on the ground of their being frequently violated, as pretend that Christianity is of no advantage, because it is not universally effective.” And, as the reasonings against a moral sense all run in the same track, so would I rebut them by the same argument. With an adaptation of the same words I would reply,

² *Esprit des Loix*, l. xxiv. c. 2.

“ Men may as well object to the efficacy of the Gospel, on the ground of its precepts being frequently violated, as pretend that a moral sense is of slight or of no advantage, because it is not universally effective.”

Convinced then, as I am, that the objections urged against a moral sense by its impugners, can have no weight against that, with which, I conceive, we have all of us been blessed in an instinctive principle of benevolence, I would here call your attention to a few observations, which may serve to show in what manner this principle would of itself be sufficient to produce those effects upon the heart and conduct which are ascribed to the conscience.

This gift, if an essential property of his nature, must exist in man unassisted by the light of revelation and in man blessed with that assistance. Let us then consider what would be the probable operations of such a principle in these different conditions of human existence ; and see, as far as the limits of our discourse will permit, how completely our notional view of its operation is borne out by experience.

Let us, first, take a view of what would be the effects of a principle of benevolence in man unassisted by revelation. And here we must endeavour to do what, as Christians, it may indeed be somewhat difficult to accomplish : we must endeavour to cast off all our preconceived notions of the peculiar holiness, with which we are accustomed to regard the grace of Charity ; and we must bear in mind, that, in

unconverted man, this endowment would merely take its place on an equal rank with the other tendencies of his being ; that it would not present itself with any peculiar claim to his respect ; and that it would not have the support of any religious sanction, which might dispose him, in the moment of internal conflict, to be guided by its impulses, rather than by those of any other propensity of his nature. Under such circumstances, to what good would the instinct prompt him ? It would incline him to entertain affections for all those, who had shewn affection towards him ; who were the protectors of his infant years ; who had been the companions of his earliest sports ; or who were associated with him in his first acts of daring, in warfare or in the chase. It would animate him with kindly feelings for all those, whom he met in the common intercourse of life ; and it would leave him favourably disposed towards every individual of the human race, who was not rendered an object of suspicion to him by the clash of opposing interests. It might not have power to make head against the evil influences of private enmity ; and its emotions might be partially extinguished by the prejudices, which irritate hostile nations against each other. But even thus, in its lowest and least cultivated state, it would have force enough to connect families and tribes together by the bonds of amity. It would, generally, in the every-day intercourse between man and man, evince itself in offices of kindness and protection ; and it would, from time to time, on occa-

sions of strong excitement, display its potency in admirable acts of fidelity and gratitude, of generosity and self-devotion. Such would be the natural effects of the principle. And I believe, that no section of our race has ever been discovered in any region of the earth, however low in the scale of civilization or debased by demoralizing habits and opinions, among whom it has not proved fruitful of these effects.

This then is the *good*, which benevolence, as a moral sense, would naturally prompt us to : what would be the *evils*, from which it would naturally deter us ? It would not, in the absence of revealed instruction, affect any of the gross and licentious vices. These, indeed, by cherishing our selfishness, are fearfully pernicious to all our generous emotions. They are, by the prohibition of the law of God, made sinful on that very account. But the practice of them only so remotely bears on the principle of benevolence, that their connexion with it would not be discovered, till the moral vision had acquired by experience a more extended scope, and learnt to track the course of human actions to their distant consequences. In an uneducated state, the instinct would leave these, its secret, but most certain enemies, to be followed without rebuke ; till itself became corrupted by their excesses, or till the propensities they had fostered grew too strong for its control. It would also be liable to the check and interference of opposing agencies, to which I shall subsequently refer. It would certainly prevent a man from doing

injury to those, who were the objects of his affections. It would spread its guardian shield, at least as widely as the sphere of its attachments extended ; “ for love worketh no ill³. ” And, even beyond that sphere, it would interpose, to secure the happiness of one man from the aggressions of another, in all cases of slight temptation, and where the benefit to be derived from the act of fraud or violence would be of little moment, and the injury inflicted great. To this extent, we might conceive, that a sentiment of humanity would have the power of making itself heard and attended to ; and to this extent, as far as we can judge from the reports of travellers and of missionaries, we find that it does actually operate among barbarous people :—and I may add, among those miserable classes of our own, to whom, from the rapid growth of the population and the tardy increase of the means of religious instruction, the light of revelation is virtually eclipsed, and almost as completely hidden, as if it had never been communicated to man.

The instinct of benevolence would not only prompt to good and withhold from evil ; but it would fulfil the retributive office of the conscience. Its complacency, when its dictates were followed, would correspond with that serene alacrity of soul, by which a good conscience is accompanied ; and its distress, when resisted and overpowered by any hostile prin-

³ Rom. xiii. 10.

ciple of our nature, would also correspond with that inward misgiving and depression, from which a bad conscience is never altogether free. Is it not, indeed, from this very principle, that all true repentance derives its origin? If we wish, under any conditions of human existence, to awaken the sinner to a sense of guilt, what means do we always adopt to effect our object? We address his humanity. We set before him a strong representation of the misery which his sins have brought upon some victim among his fellow-creatures, and we then trust to the lingering suggestions of the grace of charity in his heart to give emphasis to our argument. It is from the pain we feel, on contemplating the grief which our actions have inflicted upon another, that we attain an apprehension of their iniquity. Even the Christian is awakened to a conviction of his wickedness against God, by means of compunction for the wickedness which he has committed against man. And the grace of Love, which the Holy Spirit has breathed into his soul, is the first avenger of his transgressions against the law of Love, which has been delivered to him by his Saviour. The case, in an inferior degree, is the same with those on whom the Sun of Righteousness has not dawned. They find that the instinct of benevolence which their Creator has endowed them with, will not allow them to transgress its dictates with impunity. It remonstrates against their iniquities in the pains and misgivings of the conscience. Its retributive operation is, of course,

commensurate to the degree in which the good affections that are kindred to it have been fostered ; in which the evil propensities that are opposed to it have been subdued ; and in which the understanding has been enlightened with regard to the remote tendencies of their conduct, either to advance the happiness it delights in, or to produce the wretchedness it abhors. Thus, in an uneducated state, its action would be limited. It would resent no deed, however evil in its nature, from which no apparent injury ensued ; or which was wrought against an enemy ; or of which, perhaps, the object had not been previously dear ; or which was not perpetrated under appalling circumstances. But, still, an action thus limited it would have. That in every, even the lowest, stage of human society, the aggrieved instinct of humanity does, in the form of conscience, exercise a judicial power over the presumptuous opposers of its authority, is as certainly assured to us, as it is possible for the accumulated testimony, to be gathered from the history of the human race, to render it. There are no accounts of any people extant, among whom we do not meet with exemplary instances of the mysterious pains and penalties which it inflicts upon the sinner ;—of the spectral forms which are ever glaring on him, and from which he can never fly ;—of the chilling horror which oppresses him in the seasons of silence and solitude and night ;—of the fearful visions which have arisen to terrify the hardiest in the hour, not of repose, but of sleep ;—of those misgivings of

the heart which have filled the sighing of the winds, the rustling of forest leaves, the noise of waters, with the shrieks and wailings of his expiring victims;—of the alarm with which the bold bad man, who could brave death undaunted amid the clash of arms and the rush of opposing soldiery, has fled from the horrors of the tempest, when the voice of Heaven's angry spirit seemed to call upon him in the crash of the thunder, and the whirl of Heaven's avenging sword to flash in lightnings before his eyes;—or of the sudden gush of strong emotion, which has revealed the closely-smothered and heart-consuming anguish of the sinner, when, at some unexpected word of kindness from the child, the long-estranged relative, or the humble man of God, the streams of tenderness have been reopened, and burst forth in floods of penitential tears. It is thus, that the principle of benevolence, with which we have been endowed, and in which the soul of the creature bears the stamp of the image of his Creator, not only prompts to good, and restrains from evil, but never altogether fails to vindicate its authority, when set at nought and outraged.

But there would be several obstacles, to prevent the instinct of humanity from securing to itself even that limited dominion over the actions, which I have conceived it might attain, naturally, and without the support and sanction of revelation, if it met with a fair field for its exercise. It would, in the first place, be encountered by a throng of opposite in-

clinations. It would find all its more generous suggestions combated by those propensities of our nature, which immediately appertain to our self-aggrandisement and self-gratification. It would dwell, the rightful sovereign of the soul, amid a multitude of carnal appetites and worldly passions, like the Christ among the infuriated inhabitants of Jerusalem ; and it would be subjected, like Him, to the attacks and persecutions of the rebel host, whom it was designed to guide and to save. It would, in the second place, be encountered by the evil customs of the world ; and these would both tend to abridge its influence, and to deaden its perceptions. The impugners of a moral sense demand, how the prevalence of such malignant customs are to be explained, consistently with the supposition of our possessing such a faculty. The objector's argument amounts to this :—such or such a custom, prevalent among a large body of mankind, is repugnant to the suggestions ascribed to a moral sense ; and, consequently, there can be no such thing as a moral sense. But, to show the futility of this argument, it is only necessary to apply it to other customs, which have equally prevailed, among large bodies of our fellow-men, in opposition to some of the most active and potent elements of our nature. Large bodies of men have devoted themselves to lives of abstinence and chastity ; consequently, there can be no such things as sensual appetites. Large bodies of men have devoted themselves to lives of voluntary

poverty and humility; consequently, there can be no such things as avarice and ambition. If the argument hold good in the first case, against a moral sense; so must it also in the second, against our carnal appetites; and in the third, against the most influential of our passions. The existence of a custom, opposite to what we conceive of an innate moral sentiment, does not prove that there is no such faculty in man; but that it is not strong enough to maintain an effectual resistance against the antagonist principle,—the violent passion, or the gross appetite of our nature,—by which the custom was introduced and kept alive. On all occasions, however, before a custom can be considered as bearing upon the subject at all, it is requisite to be informed of one very important fact,—we must know under what circumstances it originated. We are well aware, that, from the extraordinary disposition of mankind to go on blindly in the track of others, any custom, when once established, would be followed. But what we have to look to, is the commencement of it. How did it begin? Now, it would be no difficult thing, if our imaginations were authority on such subjects, to imagine such a beginning for every one of those monstrous anomalies, which we are least able to reduce to an agreement with the kinder affections of human nature, as might connect its origin with the very affection which it appeared to contravene. Is it improbable, that those practices against the love of the parent for the child, or the child for the

parent, which are adduced as arguments in disproof of a moral sense, may have first sprung up, during some extraordinary emergency, in which the instinct was madly stimulated to belie itself, and to act in contradiction to its strongest tendencies? For instance: In some moment of appalling public calamity, superstition demands the richest sacrifice which can be wrung from the terrors of the people. "The thousands of rams, and the tens of thousands of rivers of oil⁴," prove to be ineffective: and, when every other oblation has failed, the parent lays his infant on the altar, "the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul⁵," not because he is devoid of natural affection for his child, but because it is the dearest gift he has to offer. The threatened calamity passes away. Superstition ascribes the deliverance to the efficacy of the bloody rite, which is, again and again, had recourse to, as similar circumstances of danger may recur, till it becomes confirmed as a part of the religious worship of the people. Again, the aged man is no longer able, from the weight of years and infirmities, to follow the rapid marches of his horde through the difficult passages of their hunting-grounds; and the children, whose piety, in a less savage state of human existence, would have led them to find their happiness in providing for his support, are constrained by a hard necessity to slay, where they cannot save, and free their parent, by

⁴ Micah vi. 7.

⁵ Ibid.

one last, painful effort, from the lingering pangs of a death by starvation in the wilderness. As in these instances, so, I believe, might every other barbarous rite or practice, which has prevailed among mankind, be traced back to probable beginnings, of which the character was by no means so irreconcilable with the instinctive benevolence of the human soul, as the remote results might lead us to suppose. But, from whatever source derived, there can be no question but that, when once established, any such custom would be implicitly obeyed ; that it would be followed blindly, and without the least consideration, from the peculiar facility of mankind to accommodate themselves to every thing, whether good or evil, which is habitual to their sight ; and that it would also tend to prevent the development, and weaken the energy of our original impression towards virtue : though that impression might, all the while, be silently operating against the evil custom, and prove eventually the principal means by which its extinction might be brought about. There is a third obstacle, which the moral sense has to contend against, when separate from religion. It has to encounter the evil reasonings of the wise, and the scribe, and the disputers of this world. If that sentiment of benevolence, of which conscience is an emanation, found shelter among heathen people, in the simplicity of humble life, like Christ in the manger at Bethlehem, many of its best and holiest suggestions were regarded suspiciously by the eye of the

philosopher. Both the Stoics and the Epicureans, who, as the organs of the wisdom of pride, and the wisdom of sensuality, are the representatives of every moral system, which can be raised upon the base of wordly principles, formally disclaimed and reprobated the emotions of compassion⁶. By the one it was condemned as a weakness, to which every wise man should render himself superior; by the other, as a sense of pain, which no wise man would suffer to interfere with his enjoyments. But, still, though unsupported by revelation, its proper guide and stay; though resisted by the violent and selfish passions, and by the low and animal propensities of our nature; though counteracted by the mischievous customs, which had accumulated in the lapse of ages; though attacked and reviled in the schemes of popular philosophy, this hallowed principle never ceased to hold, not its rightful, but an influential position among mankind. It united society together by the ties of the domestic charities, and of the social affections. It deterred from a multitude of offences, which, but for its controlling power, would have been lightly perpetrated. It, in the compunctions of remorse, avenged upon the sinner, and rendered terrible to others, every more flagrant violation of its dictates. It was "the law written on the heart," to which the whole human race referred when reasoning among themselves, "and accusing, or else excusing one

⁶ See Dean Rennell's Sermon on "Benevolence."

another⁷.” It was that exposition of the Divine will, which, when no other was on record, the Almighty expected to have obeyed, and of which the violation, when it was wholly set at nought, and “the earth was filled with violence⁸,” drew down upon our transgressing race the judicial waters of the deluge. It was that law of nature, to which the patriarch Abraham confidently appealed, when he pleaded with the Lord himself for the extension of his mercy to the cities of the plain⁹. It was that moral principle, which, when it was growing daily more and more obscure by the wickedness of mankind; when all “had gone out of the way, and become unprofitable¹;” when “there was none that did good, no not one;” and when the fulness of time had arrived, the Son of God descended incarnate upon earth, to revive by His Spirit, to confirm by His instructions, to illustrate by His example, and to point out, as an infallible guide to His disciples, in the one new commandment, which he left with them as His parting legacy.

And this leads us to consider, as I proposed in the last place, the operation of the principle of benevolence in connexion with revelation. The Gospel raises this high endowment of the human soul to its legitimate position, and establishes its pre-eminence over every other faculty, and desire, and propensity, we inherit. This impression of the heart is rendered,

⁷ Romans ii. 15.

⁸ Gen. vi. 11.

⁹ Gen. xviii. 23. et seq.

¹ Romans iii. 12.

by its alliance with religion, a holy and a sacred thing. The opinions of mankind are enlisted in its favour. The virtues, which it inclines to, are admired, if not practised. The vices, which it reprobates, are reprobed, if not avoided. The public mind is directed to its objects. The Christian people begin to turn their attention to the customs, the habits, the opinions which prevail among them, and to judge of them, as good or evil, according to their agreement with the standard of the law of love. The moral regeneration of society commences, and proceeds, slowly and gradually, but still, as experience proves, with a continually hastening step. The evil practice,—as in the case of slavery,—is first discussed, then censured, then mitigated in its effects, and eventually abolished. Actions are considered, and approved or disapproved, with a view not only to the near, but to the remote effects they may produce on the welfare of our fellow-creatures. And here, we are continually led by experience and observation to correct and modify our opinions with respect to the method, in which the guiding principle of our souls may be most wisely followed out. Love, in the Christian's heart, is ever shining before him, like the pillar of light, to show the direction of the course he is to follow; but still the help of his reason is required, to be to him, what Hobab was to the Israelites², a guide, which is well acquainted with the localities, and able

² Numbers x. 29.

to lead him to the easiest passes, and to point out the pitfalls that beset the way. Apart from revelation, the instinct of humanity exists in the soul, as an admonishing, and, on some occasions, an avenging agent; in connexion with revelation, it acquires all the force of a law. It becomes supported by sanctions, which appeal to our hopes and fears, in the promise of eternal rewards, if obeyed, and the threatenings of eternal misery, if transgressed. In this sense, according to the fullest meaning of the word, Christianity really is *religion*: it is a reuniting of man to God. It re-opens the communication between the Spirit of Love in God, and that corresponding impression of the gift of love, which He inspired into the soul of man. It restores the image of God, after which man was created.

In my concluding discourse upon this subject, I shall require your attention to the practical considerations, resulting from the views I have been endeavouring to establish. But, before we part, I would observe, that the question, whether man is, or is not, endowed with an innate principle of good, is one of very considerable moment. It is not, as some would seem to represent, a point of merely speculative curiosity, and to which no consequences can attach. Why, is there any question so circumstanced? Are not all things eventually governed by opinion?—And can there be any opinion, whether right or wrong, in which the right must not conduce to good, and the wrong to evil? But, in the present instance, the re-

sults are of the highest imaginable importance. The question bears both upon the relations in which we stand with our Creator, and in which we stand with our fellow-creatures. In religion, it makes the difference whether we shall, or shall not, by admitting the total moral corruption of our race, open an entrance for the introduction of the appalling principles of Calvinism. In the intercourse of society it makes the difference, whether we shall look upon every fellow-creature as a friend, till he has proved himself an enemy, or, as an enemy, till he has proved himself a friend. That philosophy, which casts discredit on the existence of a moral sense, and a natural conscience, has produced evil, much evil. It has given us reason for regarding suspicion as wisdom. It has shaken the first, natural, substantial grounds of confidence between man and man. False as it is, it has a direct tendency to render itself true. It has not produced all the mischief, which it is calculated to produce ; because the malignant influences of the theory have been checked in their operation by the existence of those original instincts which it controverts. The happiness of the world has not been marred so widely by it, as it might have been ; because, though its promulgation has introduced a principle of chilling, withering, blighting desolation among the kind and generous affections of the human heart, those affections are too strong of nature to be readily destroyed, and too deeply rooted to be easily eradicated.

SERMON IV.

THE IMAGE OF GOD IN MAN.

GENESIS i. 27.

"God created man in his own image."

IN our former discourses we have seen that the image of God, "who is love," is reflected in the soul of man by an instinctive principle of benevolence; and that in this principle is found "a law written upon the breast," which corresponds with the law of love inculcated by the Gospel, and to which all those effects attributed to the conscience may be distinctly traced.

We now, my brethren, arrive at the practical part of our subject.—If benevolence is that faculty of our nature, in which we can distinctly trace the lineaments of the Divine image after which we were created, this is also the faculty which we are religiously bound, before all others, to cultivate and im-

prove. As, under the influence of our cherishing care and discipline, it acquires activity and vigour; as all those absorbing passions, and debasing appetites, which are engendered of an overweening attachment to ourselves disappear before it; as it obtains a dominant control over the will; as its objects take possession of the mind, and afford occupation for its powers; we gradually exalt our nature; we raise ourselves out of the condition of ordinary men; we approach ourselves, nearer and more near, to the restoration of the Divine model after which we were created; and we adopt the only means in our power of fulfilling our Saviour's exhortation, and becoming "perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect³."

The cultivation of this holy principle in its disciples, is the great end of the Christian religion. It is that affection, opposite to all malice, which distinguishes the children of light from the children of darkness. It is that holy principle, incompatible with the principles by which the mass of mankind are swayed, which separates the disciples of the Gospel from the servants of the world. It is that "most excellent gift of charity," which, among the members of the Church itself, our blessed Lord has appointed as the test, by which He discerns those who are, from those who are not, belonging to His flock; those who are elevated by the dispositions of their hearts into

³ Matt. v. 48.

communion with Christ their head, and the saints, and martyrs, and spirits of just men made perfect, from those who assume the name of Christian, without any apprehension of its import and its obligations; who have a form of godliness, but not the power; and who appertain to the kingdom of heaven by profession only, and to the kingdom of Satan by their thoughts and wishes, their interests and their affections.

But if the restoration of the grace of love to its dominion over the heart be the great work which the Christian has to perform, in making his calling and election sure; most important is it for us, as important as the hopes of everlasting happiness, and the fear of everlasting misery can render it, that we should purify our hearts of every selfish and malignant influence which is opposed to it, and render them subject to its lawful dominion. But there is a class of persons who admit that such is our bounden duty, and that all Christians ought thus to act; but who, nevertheless, demand an especial dispensation for themselves, on the plea of some natural infirmity of character. They have inherited with their birth, they tell us, a spirit the very reverse of the mild and gentle, the humble and forbearing, the meek and affectionate spirit of the Gospel. Their nature is of a more stubborn material. It is of an adamantine hardness, which may break, but cannot bend; which may be splintered, but which never can be softened. Now, if such a confession were

accompanied, when made, with any sincere feeling of unworthiness, we might not be altogether without hope of the reformation of those who make it. But this is very seldom the case. With the majority of worldly-hearted persons, those dispositions, which are at variance with Christian love, are rather valued as the ornaments, than condemned as the defects of their character. They regard their austerity, as an indication of moral strength ; their pride, as an evidence of exalted sentiments ; their quick and violent passions, as signs of ardour and energy and sensibility of soul ; their inflexible resentments, as the genuine fruits of a manly and deep-rooted sense of honour :—while that touch of kindlier feeling, which still exists within them, as the germ of the grace they have to foster, and which, in the secret depths of the heart, utters its meek and unregarded pleadings against the suggestion of every harsher quality, is discountenanced as a weakness of their nature. Under such circumstances, the hope of reformation is far distant. No man will ever seek to amend a character, of which he is not thoroughly ashamed. In this case, the very first motive to conversion is wanting. The will is opposed to it ; and the stubbornness of that will must be subdued by the chastisements of Divine Providence,—by sickness, by disappointment, by adversity, or by affliction,—before the arguments of the Christian minister upon the beauty of Christian love, and the indispensability of its acquisition to every disciple of Christ,

will have any real or permanent influence upon the heart. But when it is asserted that the power of rooting out the dispositions, which choke it up, and prevent its development, is denied, you speak without knowledge. Have you ever tried to Christianize your character? Have you ever desired to try? On the contrary, while you confess, that your temper is opposed to the temper required by the Gospel, and maintain, that you are incapable of moulding it to a nearer resemblance of the mind that was in your Redeemer, and to the nature of God after which you were framed; do you not really glory in your unsanctified condition? Does not your vanity, ingenuously but ill disguised, flatter you with a notion, that you are gaining credit to yourself for an ineradicable virtue, while, with a mock humility, you pretend to be confessing an irremediable defect?

Was it the fact, that those dispositions, which are contrary to the principles of benevolence in the soul, were as unconquerable as you represent, most miserable, my brethren, would your spiritual condition be! If the pride, the irritability, the sullenness, the revengefulness, the eager desire of personal aggrandizement, and the bitter envy, by which all such selfish passions are accompanied, were indeed without a remedy, most miserable would be the inference! It would be an admission, that your salvation was desperate; that you were not only lost at the present moment, but without hope for the future; that the dark and exclusive views of the absolute

predestinarian were correct ; that only a certain portion of mankind were born to share the mercies of the Almighty ; and that all others,—among whom you were yourselves included,—afflicted by an impenetrable obduracy of heart, which no argument could touch, and no discipline could soften, were, from their birth, involved in a sentence of foredoomed condemnation. But such, we know and feel, is not the condition of our race. The voice of our God and our Redeemer calling upon us to hearken to the “ message which we have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another ”, immediately addresses itself to a principle of love, which is an original impression of our nature, and by which its wisdom is apprehended, and its sanctity confirmed. That principle is the “ one talent ” given even to the least favoured of us to improve, and for the improvement of which we are responsible to our heavenly Sovereign, who has committed it to our charge. It may shed but a faint and flickering light over the soul ; but that light may be quickened and increased, not only by means of our own exertions, but by the help of graces within our reach. The Almighty has not required us to perform a task, which we have not the power of executing. Heaven is opened, through the merits of our Saviour’s death, to all believers, who fulfil the Christian law of love ; and that law may be fulfilled by every one of

⁴ 1 John ii. 3.

us, who will resolutely apply himself to the moral culture of his own heart.

We are led, I know, by an almost universal delusion of self-love, to suppose, that every unholy passion may be easily restrained, except the particular passion which prevails over ourselves. We conceive, that all temptations may be easily overcome, except the temptations by which we are ourselves assailed. Self-love persuades us, that every condition is more favourable to the great work of our salvation, than that in which we ourselves are placed. Every man imagines, that virtue would be easy to him, if his situation were that of his neighbour, instead of his own. When, for instance, our Saviour spoke of the difficulty of “ a rich man entering into the kingdom of heaven⁵;” the apostles, who, as poor and humble men, were aware of the spiritual perils to which poverty is exposed, and accustomed to consider the condition of the wealthy as that, in which salvation may be most easily achieved, exclaimed, “ Lord, who then shall be saved⁶? ” and immediately they added, “ We, Lord, have forsaken all, and followed thee⁷. ” But had this boasted sacrifice been urged, as an example for his imitation, on that young man, who turned away from our Saviour’s invitation, and would not leave all and follow Him, because “ he had great possessions⁸, ” with what contempt would he have

⁵ Matt. xix. 23.

⁶ Ibid. 25.

⁷ Ibid. 27.

⁸ Ibid. 22.

treated the Apostles' evidence of faith and love ! He would have forgotten, that all a man possesses is his all, whether it be much or little. He would have flattered himself that, in their humble condition, his devotion would have been the same. And he would have excused his disobedience to his own heart, by comparing the difficulties of his own case with the facilities which he imagined in that of the Apostles. In this manner, we all perceive the obstacles, and nothing but the obstacles, which lie in the way of our own course of duty ; while we observe the advantages, and nothing but the advantages, which are possessed by our fellow-Christians. And the same partial view which we thus take of our different circumstances in life, we also take of our several characters and dispositions. We perceive that others are gentle, while we are violent ; liberal, while we are sordid ; full of sympathy with the successful, while we are the prey of envy or of jealousy ; careless of the little slights or injuries they encounter, while we are impatient of every offence, and implacable in our resentments ; and we are willing to persuade ourselves that so extraordinary a difference could not exist without some constitutional origin. We see our fellow-creatures floating gently down the quiet stream of life, undisturbed by any gusts of passion ; while we are dwelling amid the agitation of a continual storm ; and we cannot believe, that for the calm, as for the tempest, each is equally indebted to himself. We feel that our own hearts impose a

powerful impediment to the cultivation of that grace of charity which God demands of us ; and, while we contemplate the success with which the true children of God have striven to develope it, we consider it impossible that they should have accomplished so much more than we, if they had had an equal resistance to encounter. But is not this an error of self-love ? Are not the difficulties opposed to the acquisition of the Christian temper, always similar in their nature and degree ? Selfishness is the foe to be subdued ; and are not all originally held in constraint by this great enemy of their salvation ? The same disease is universally prevalent ; it only varies in the hue of its symptoms. In all, the flesh strives against the spirit. The austere, or the tender-hearted, are, by nature, alike anxious for the objects which engage them, are alike disturbed by opposition, are alike resentful of disappointment. Each is equally distant, perhaps, from the perfect development of the grace of Christian love. If the one is impatient of all interference with his actual interests ; the other is no less exacting in the exorbitant demands, and the jealous irritability, of his affections. All have those natural evils of disposition and of temper which are engendered of selfishness to overcome, before the image of God in the soul can be restored to its original distinctness. And when we consider, in our own hearts, the impediments which appear to preclude the hope of our making any advance in the accomplishment of the task, and perceive, in the life

and character of a brother Christian, the proofs of the advances which he has made towards it; we may learn from the sense of our own defects, that the task is difficult, and from his success, that it is not impracticable.

Much of the difficulty indeed is created by ourselves. The great strength of those inclinations which are opposed to the grace of charity, is not so much the effect of any disproportionate force allotted to them in the constitution of our moral nature, as to those vices, by which their original strength has been fostered and increased. The habits of your life, the objects of your pursuit, the views and opinions you adopt, the companions with whom you associate, the conversation you delight in, form a school of discipline, in which your instinctive benevolence is suppressed, and the antagonist principles are drawn forth. You allow yourselves to become so immoderately attached to the riches, the distinctions, and the pleasures of this world, that, from thinking only of yourselves and your concerns, you become incapable of any generous interest in the concerns of others; have no intimacy with any one, which is not based on some hope of personal advantage; and regard every man as an enemy, who at all interferes with your desires. In such a case, the attainment of the Christian temper will appear to you as an effort beyond your strength. But, if it does, the weakness, remember, is of your own creating. Your moral condition is not natural, but induced. It is occasioned

by the neglect of that holy principle of our religion, which requires us “to be temperate in all things” on that very account; because temperance in the pursuit of all transitory objects, forms a sort of outwork to defend the character, and protect the moral weakness of our nature from incurring still farther injury. This defence you are capable of maintaining. The tendency of the heart to those passions, which rebel against the Law of Love, you may not, by your own natural strength, have the power of remedying; but, at least, you have the power of preventing the increase of that tendency. If you cannot heal yourselves, may you not poison and hurt yourselves? It is God who must sanctify your hearts; but who corrupted them? “Will you,” demands Baxter¹, “willingly poison yourself, because you cannot cure yourself? Methinks,” he continues, “you should the more forbear it:—you should the more take heed of sinning, if you cannot mend what sin doth mar.”

Neither is our immoderate attachment to the interests and pleasures of the world, the only means, by which the natural difficulties that oppose the attainment of the Christian character are increased. A very material check to the development of that principle is created, by the constant habit we allow ourselves of observing nothing in our fellow-creatures but their faults and follies. Instead of contemplating their brighter qualities, we delight

⁹ 1 Cor. ix. 25.

¹ *Call to the Unconverted.* Preface.

ourselves with observing and criticising, and recording the vices of their characters. In this way, a kind of dull misanthropy, a bitter coldness of heart, a severe and unchristian malignity of temper, is fostered, which, confining all the kindly feelings of our nature to the narrow circle of a man's own hearth, suppresses that liberal and diffusive spirit of benevolence, which is the characteristic and the duty of every true member of the Church of Christ. If we are always on the watch to detect the little imperfections, the trivial follies, the ridiculous vanities of our neighbours, and to render them the subjects of sarcasm and of jest; it is impossible, that the kindlier feelings of our nature should ever expand themselves in their favour. We check the free current of the affections; and the attention, preoccupied by insignificant peculiarities of manner, fails to observe the sterling good qualities of their characters. If there is in every individual of our race something to blame; so is there always something to commend. And, as we are all participants in a common frailty, so have we all a common interest in dealing lightly with each other's imperfections; while, as Christians, enjoined to cultivate the grace of mutual love, we are bound to seek out, and to fix our attention upon, those more estimable qualities, which are calculated to excite and keep alive in our breasts those sentiments of brotherly kindness which Christianity requires. It is only thus, that our intercourse with our fellow-

creatures can be cemented by the band of mutual good will, or extend beyond a mere shallow shew of courtesy, which bears the form, without the substance, of cordiality. As to their defects, unless we have a prospect of amending them, or unless the necessity of doing an act of justice to another should constrain us to observe upon them ; it is, I am confident, far better for our own sake, that they should be passed over in silence, and, as far as possible, be buried in oblivion. If we possessed the Christian disposition, such would inevitably be our conduct. All evil would be repugnant to our nature. We should endeavour to close our eyes against it ; we should avoid the mention, we should shun the recollection of it. And, by acting in consistency with the course, to which the feeling of Christian love would lead, we adopt the best mode of cultivating the disposition itself, and of preventing the growth of those uncharitable feelings, by which the paramount commandment of the Gospel is violated.

Another very material check to the development of that holy principle in the heart, which is required of us by the law of Christ, is raised by the degree, to which we involve ourselves in the bewildering embarrassments of party feeling and of party association. The spirit of partizanship, whether in politics or religion, never effects an entrance in our breasts, without introducing a host of evil and pernicious companions along with it. There follow, in its train, a blind partiality towards those of our own inclining,

and a proportionate prejudice against all, who are not of the sect or faction we belong to; a determination to find our adherents always in the right, and a strange willingness to think our opponents always in the wrong. We acquire a notion, that the views, opinions, and habits of life, which do not exactly tally with our own, are inconsistent with moral rectitude, or with a deep and sincere sense of piety.—Now, such a general adoption of all who agree with us to our friendship, and such a general rejection from it of all who disagree with us, are not only inimical to the expansion of the Gospel character, but are absolutely incompatible with its existence. “If,” says our Saviour¹, “ye salute,—or show courtesy to,—your brethren only; what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so.” And however delightful it may be to live only among those, whose thoughts flow in unison with our own; whose conversation is the echo of our own opinions; and in whose mode of life our own habits are reflected; in all such exclusive societies our benevolence becomes exclusive. We learn to think too highly of the members of our own particular party, and too meanly of all the rest of our fellow-creatures. The pharisaic pride of heart and bigotry of mind are imperceptibly, but certainly, engendered. And if we would, really and practically, not by mere word and profession, learn to fulfil the Gospel law

¹ Matthew v. 47.

of loving, not only those who love us, but those also who oppose and differ from us; we must, as the opportunity serves, seek them out, and mingle with them, on terms of free and friendly intercourse, that we may learn to judge them fairly; that we may bring their arguments and our own to the test of amicable discussion; that we may discover where they are right, and where we are wrong; that we may promote the cause of truth, by breaking down those barriers of personal prejudice which prevent its diffusion; and that we may open a way for the range of our benevolence, as ample as the extent of the human race. Let it be your object never to dwell on the differences of opinion that subsist between us, but on the points of union and agreement. Let it be your endeavour, with that sentiment of religious love, which, according to St. Paul, "rejoices in the truth," to adopt from all parties whatever opinions they may maintain, which are in conformity with the rule of truth and right; that there may be more points on which we agree, and fewer on which we differ. Let it be your pious determination always to give the weight of your example and support to whatever you feel to be deserving of approbation, though the suggestion should emanate from an adverse quarter; that no just ground of schism, or discord, may ever be authorized by you. For the sake of Christian charity, expel, as you would a deadly pestilence, every touch of party feeling from your breast. Whatever your political

opinions may be, hold them as a patriot, only looking to and desiring the good of your country, without allowing yourselves to adopt the distinctions and the prejudices of any of those factions, which array Englishman against Englishman with as bitter a rancour, as if they were inhabitants of barbarous and hostile states. And, in the same way, and for the same reason, with regard to religion, hold those opinions, which are presented to you on the authority of two faithful and concurrent witnesses, the Bible and the Church, firmly but liberally, as a Christian,—an humble, simple, pious and progressing Christian,—and not as a member of any of those parties, by whom the body of the Church is unhappily divided, and all of whom seem to be intent on perpetuating the national sin of schism, by cherishing prejudices against each other, and thus destroying the hope of conciliation.

Avoiding then all such courses, as may tend to impede the development of the principle of Christian love, diligently apply yourselves to the only means of cherishing this principle in your hearts: by strictly living in accordance with its requirements. In this respect, there is an inseparable coincidence between the practice of the duty, which the law of love enjoins, and the discipline, by which the disposition may be cultivated. According to the most literal sense of the expression, our Saviour expects His disciples to be “a peculiar people²?.” He expects, that they

² Titus ii. 4.

shall live for others, and not for themselves ; that all those moving passions of the heart, which, with the children of the world, have a personal aim and object, shall, with them, operate, under the direction of the will of God, to the promotion of the welfare of their fellow-creatures ; that they shall have no temporal ambition, beyond that of rendering themselves pre-eminently fitted for the discharge of the duties of their station ; that they shall have no desire of personal aggrandizement ; but, content to leave their success or failure in the career of life to the disposal of Providence, only be solicitous to fulfil their duties to the utmost ; that they shall be careless of their personal ease and comfort, and be only anxious to advance, in the course of duty, and according to the limits of their duty, the happiness of their relatives, their friends, their dependants, their neighbours, their fellow-countrymen, their fellow-creatures. This is the business of the Christian's life. This is the work he has to do. We are led, by a sort of popular error, to suppose, that the duty of Christian charity is confined to the relief of distress, to offices of compassion, to the mere distribution of alms to the afflicted. This is certainly an important part of its duties, and a part, indeed, so distinctly laid down, and so frequently insisted on in the Gospel, that, as St. Ambrose very justly observes, "if it be a crime worthy of the eternal vengeance of Heaven, for the poor to steal from the possessions of the rich ; it is a no less

flagrant act of injustice in the eyes of God, for the rich to refuse the poor the assistance they have the power of rendering them." But the administering to the relief of misery, is the extraordinary and occasional, not the ordinary, daily, hourly, duty of Christian love; for that is the promotion of happiness. Now, my brethren, by making this the object of your conduct, you not only fulfil the precepts of the Gospel, but you adopt the most effectual means of fostering that disposition, which is requisite to the perfect fulfilment of the law of Christ, and by which the image of God is restored to the soul. St. Paul has assured us³, that if we "have not charity," our good works can "profit us nothing:"—and this follows, as an immediate consequence, from the acknowledged fact, that, without this grace, we fail in our performance of the new commandment of Christ, and are wanting in that sign, by which Christ distinguishes His true, from His pretended, disciples. But, I believe it to be almost impossible for a man to live in the habitual practice of kind and generous actions, without cultivating the grace of Christian love in his heart, as the effect of his practice. By attending to the wants of others, he would loosen the bonds of selfishness. He would naturally acquire an interest in the welfare of his fellow-creatures, as he was habitually occupied in promoting it. He would learn to delight in their happiness,

³ 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

as in the success of his own work. He would grow benevolent towards others, as he rendered them benevolent towards himself. And the gratitude, which he excited in the breasts of his fellow-creatures, would be the parent of brotherly love in his own. Our Saviour has promised the grace of faith as the reward of obedience. "If," He says⁴, "any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." And Christian love may, in the same manner, be humbly anticipated as the reward of obedience to the will of God. Our Lord has assured us⁵ in these very emphatic terms, "If a man will keep my words, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." "By keeping the words of Christ," you act in unison with the counsels of Providence. You place yourself, as it were, in the course by which the streams of mercy flow; you solicit the illumination of the grace of God, in the paths of righteousness; and, according to the ordinary laws by which the Almighty dispenses the graces of His Spirit, you cannot fail of receiving the illumination you solicit.—And, my brethren, on that grace it is, that we must finally depend for the success of our endeavours to attain the full development of the perfect gift of Charity. By our own strength and exertions we may remove the obstacles, which lie in the way of its development. We may prevent its being stifled by sin, or by the

⁴ John vii. 17.

⁵ John xiv. 23.

indulgence of malevolent opinions; and we can foster its growth by gentle habits of thought and conduct. But "it is God, who worketh in us both to will and to do."⁶ It is on that Spirit of Christ, which, according to St. Paul⁷, "is in every one of us, except we be reprobate," that our real ability of acquiring the pure, the holy, and the benevolent temper of the Christian depends. One of the great privileges, which the Gospel opens to its disciples, is the power of conquering their natural infirmities by supernatural means. And there is no defect of character, however deep-rooted or confirmed, which may not be effectually eradicated, if we humbly and devoutly address ourselves to the appointed means of grace, to the study of God's will and counsels, as set before us in the Scripture, to the devout observance of the duties of private and of public worship, and to frequent sacramental communion. To all men, who believe in Jesus, the power is given to become the sons of God⁸; and that power we must avail ourselves of, and use it, in obtaining the love, which distinguished the Son of God, if we would be numbered with Him among the children of God. This mode of making your calling and election sure may be difficult, but it is indispensable. Other and easier modes of salvation are, I know, devised and depended

⁶ Phil. ii. 13.

⁷ 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

⁸ John i. 12. "To them gave he the power (*right*, or *privilege*) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

upon. There are, who trust to be saved by faith in a code of peculiar doctrines ; and who grow cold-hearted towards mankind in general, as they increase in zeal for their own sect. There are, who trust to be saved by an ascetic separation from all the kindly intercourses of society ; and who become alienated from their fellow-creatures, as they presume they are approaching nearer to their God. There are, who trust to be saved by an unwearied attention to theological studies ; and who grow, every day, more skilled in what a Christian may advantageously know, without making any, even the slightest, advances towards improvement in what a Christian ought to feel. But all these grounds of confidence are vain. There is but one sure way, as we learn from our Saviour's description of the day of judgment, of classing ourselves among the few who shall be chosen, from among the many who are called ; and that is, " faith which worketh by love²."

But to this affection we should look for our happiness :—its gratifications are the delights that we should seek after. It is not only hereafter, but even here, that we reap the fruits of the diligent and successful cultivation of this grace. One who was eminently learned as to the things of this world, though most unhappily ignorant as to those of the next, has declared that, "if the choice were given him, he would rather for his own happiness and self-enjoy-

² Gal. v. 6.

ment, have a friendly, humane heart, than possess all the other virtues of Demosthenes and Philip united!." He spoke only of the satisfaction which is afforded by such an inferior sentiment of benevolence, as may exist in man, unregenerated by the Spirit of Christ, and unawakened to the holier sympathies of His Gospel: and yet, even of that faint spark of charity he records his opinion, that it is capable of imparting more of the light and warmth of real and substantial happiness to the heart of man, than all the celebrity of Demosthenes or all the power of the royal Philip. What then may we not conceive of the delights which this most excellent gift of charity, improved by diligent cultivation and exalted by the grace of God, imparts to the soul of the devout and faithful disciple of the Redeemer? I do not presume to speak of that high and pure and angelic happiness, which is the inseparable accompaniment of a life regulated by the law of love; for as it is only felt, so can it only be appreciated, by those, whose souls are rich in the grace of love. To expatiate on its joys to those, who were wanting in the gift, were as idle as to dilate on the charms of music to the deaf, or of beauty to the blind:—but, to speak only of its lighter benefits, I would remind you, that by living in accordance with this law, you secure to yourselves the greatest advantages this world has to offer. This course is as likely as any other to advance you

¹ Hume. *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals.* Appendix 3.

in the attainment of temporal wealth and honour.—This, however, is of little moment.—But it will certainly put you in possession of far better things. It will secure to you the affection of your relatives and friends, the attachment and kindly feelings of your neighbours, and the respect of all to whom you may be known.

It also affords us the only real liberty which man can possibly possess. “Where the spirit of the Lord is,” says St. Paul², “there is liberty.” “Light is the yoke and easy is the burthen of Christ,” says Erasmus³, “for he has commanded nothing but mutual charity, and there is nothing which charity may not render light and easy.” But, in truth, the moment the yoke and burthen is sincerely and heartily assumed, it no longer is a yoke; it ceases to be a burthen. Our actions become more free; our desires less fettered; our faculties more absolutely our own. The precepts and prohibitions of our religion are no longer considered irksome or oppressive. Obedience becomes a delight to us. The course, which the Gospel directs us to take, is the very way of life, to which our inclinations prompt us. And, however paradoxical it may sound, the very fact of our having subjected our affections to the yoke of Christian love, originates that perfect liberty, which is enjoyed by the children of God; because it puts an end to

² 2 Cor. iii. 17.

³ In Matthæum, xi. 30.

all internal strife between the flesh and the spirit. It appeases that conflict between the will and the conscience, which agitates the breast of every worldly and unconverted man. What we desire to do, is the very thing we are enjoined to do; and no more perfect liberty can possibly be enjoyed or conceived, than the liberty of doing what we would.

But, better than all, this most excellent gift is the proof of your adoption among the children of God. If we know ourselves to be in possession of it, we may be convinced that we are in a state of grace. St. John assures us⁴, that "Love is of God;" that "if we love one another, God dwelleth in us;" that "God is Love," and, that "he who dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him." This grace is "the seed of God," of which the same Apostle speaks, affirming, that "as long as it remaineth in a man he cannot sin."⁵ Fall away from that grace he may; but, as long as he retains it unimpaired, it is impossible that he should be guilty of sin; because, as the spirit of love is the paramount principle by which his heart is swayed, all the movements of his heart are in harmony with the spirit of the commandments of the Almighty. To act in voluntary opposition to the Divine will, would be to act in opposition to the very feelings and wishes of his own heart. Infirmities of nature he may have, for he is not yet perfect, but going on unto perfection. But such errors of accident, or

⁴ 1 John iv. 7. 12. 16.

⁵ 1 John iii. 9.

surprise, are amended as soon as they are perceived, and serve not as precursors to greater ills ensuing, but as inducements to redoubled vigilance and exertion for the future. Sins they undoubtedly are, as every deviation from the strict line of righteousness must be; and the Christian himself will never so far deceive himself as to say "that he is without sin." But such offences are free from that taint of malice which constitutes the deadly property of sin; and therefore, according to the argument of St. Augustine⁴, the general charity of that Christian's heart is allowed to cover a multitude of such offences as these. When we have established the grace of love, as the ruling principle of the soul, we feel and know ourselves to be at peace with God. All fear of the judgments of the Almighty are at an end. "Perfect love," says St. John, "casteth out fear."⁵ The conscience is at rest. The heart ceases to upbraid us. "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God⁶;" and, as children, we have confidence towards our Father which is in heaven.

⁴ Vide Tractatus V. in 1 Joannis Epist. iii. 9.

⁵ 1 John iv. 18.

⁶ Romans viii. 16.

THE END.

By the same Author.

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